

"MAKE-UP" BOOK—HOW TO "MAKE-UP." A practical guide for Amateurs, with Twenty-three Colored Illustrations.

No. CCCXCV.

FRENCH'S STANDARD DRAMA.

THE ACTING EDITION.

THE IRON MASTER.

A Drama in Four Acts,

FROM

LE MAITRE DES FORGES

OF

GEORGES OHNET.

TRANSLATED AND ARRANGED FROM THE AUTHOR'S VERSION,

BY

J. V. PRICHARD.

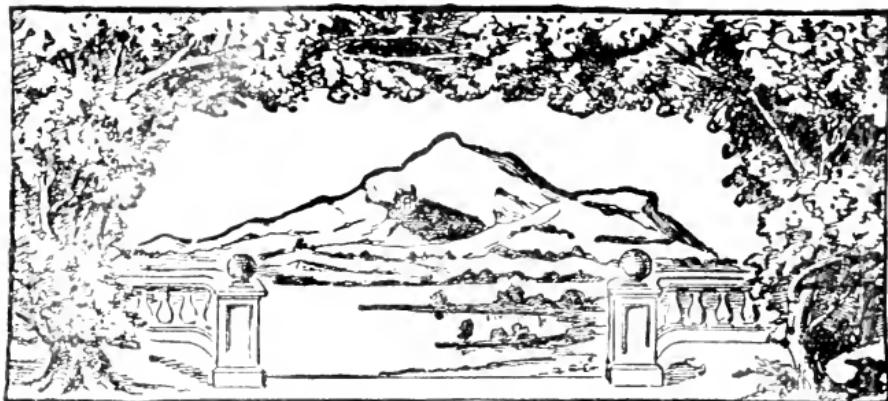
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NEW YORK

W. L. LUNCH SAM

22 STREET

on
22 STREET

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PHILIPPE DERBLAY.

GASTON, *Duc de Bligny.*

MONSIEUR MOULINET.

MONSIEUR BACHELIN.

OCTAVE DE BEAULIEU.

BARON DE PRÉFONT.

DOCTOR SERVAN.

DE PONTAC.

A FOOTMAN.

CLAIRE DE BEAULIEU.

ATHÉNAÏS MOULINET.

MARQUISE DE BEAULIEU.

SOPHIE, *Baronne de Préfont.*

SUZANNE DERBLAY.

BRIGITTE.

TIME.—The Present.

SCENE.—The Château de Beaulieu, and Derblay's house at Pont-Avesnes. Two weeks are supposed to elapse between Acts I. and II.; eight months between Acts II. and III.; and one night between Acts III. and IV.

THE IRON MASTER.

ACT I.

Scene.—A salon in the Château de Beaulieu. A large casement-window at back opening upon a terrace, beyond which is seen a spur of the Jura Mountains, clearly defined against a cloudless sky. The furniture is of the Louis XV. period. Doors, right and left. A large table occupies the centre of the stage, a little to the left, at the two sides of and behind which are chairs. To the left stands an easy-chair, protected by a screen, before which is placed an embroidery-frame. To the right a sofa, beyond which is a piano, with stool; between the piano and the door, R., a chair. On either side of the casement, at back, a pedestal bearing a vase of flowers; music-books and a vase holding a shrub furnish the piano. Upon the table are seen a bell, a jar filled with flowers and a photograph-album. To the right of the casement, an easy-chair. As the curtain rises, CLAIRE is discovered reclining upon the easy-chair before the open casement, an open book lying upon her lap. The MARQUISE DE BEAULIEU occupies the screened chair, L., and works at the embroidery-frame, while the BARONNE DE PRÉFONT, seated left of table, embroiders.

MARQUISE. (Having regarded her daughter for a moment.) Claire?

CLAIRe. (Turning slowly.) Mother?

MARQUISE. What are you doing there, so sad and absorbed?

CLAIRe. Nothing, mother.

MARQUISE. Then pray do not isolate yourself; come and join in our conversation.

CLAIRe. (Rises; then, after a pause.) This drowsy air has made me languid. (Comes down to back of table, places her book upon it, and passes to the right of screen.) How long is it since we have had letters from St. Petersburg?

MARQUISE. (Exchanging a glance with the BARONNE.) About two months.

CLAIRe. (Sadly.) Yes, it is fully two months! (Goes up stage, passes behind the table, and comes down centre.)

MARQUISE. Why will you think so incessantly of that, and rack your brain?

CLAIRE. Of what would you have me think, if not of my fiancé? And how can I help racking my brain, as you say, to discover some motive for his silence?

MARQUISE. I admit that the affair baffles explanation. Having passed a week with us last year, (CLAIRE approaches an ottoman beside MARQUISE.) the Due de Bligny, my nephew, departed, promising to return to Paris during the winter. (CLAIRE seats herself upon ottoman.) At first he wrote that certain political complications detained him at his post in Russia; then he pretended that, as the winter was on the wane, he would await the summer for his return to France. The summer came and went, but no Due. Here it is autumn, and Gaston scorns to offer any further pretexts for his delayed arrival; ~~in fact, he scarcely takes the trouble to write to us.~~ My dear girls, the present is a most degenerate epoch; the men of our set are no longer even civil.

CLAIRE. How if he were ill, unable to send us tidings of himself?

MARQUISE. We should have been informed by the Embassy.

BARONNE. Yes, your mother is right there, Claire.

CLAIRE. He promised me so faithfully to come and pass the winter in Paris, and I had so counted upon the pleasure of being with him! I should have triumphed in his successes, and perhaps he would not have been insensible to mine. You must confess, mother, that he is no jealous lover. And yet, wherever we have been, I have been surrounded. Even here, in this deserted Beaulieu, I possess some adorers; as, for instance, our neighbor, the iron-master.

MARQUISE. Monsieur Derblay?

BARONNE. Oh, Aunt, that case is as plain as day. Ever since his first visit to the Château, some two weeks ago, ~~when he~~ came to offer you some excuse for encroaching upon your territory, he has been upon his knees before Claire, a very devotee, in perpetual adoration.

MARQUISE. I find him very agreeable in spite of his adoration. It is quite possible, however, that my sight is not as acute as it was once, and consequently I have failed to notice his manœuvres. I shall keep my eye upon him for the future.

CLAIRE. Mother, Monsieur Derblay's homage is perfectly respectful; I have no cause to complain of it. (She rises.) Besides, the Due is not here to defend his welfare, (Comes down, R.) and you must admit that a woman may tire of playing the Penelope, awaiting the return of one who never comes.

BARONNE. (Rising and coming down.) Were I in your place, I should long ago have given up weaving my web.

CLAIRE. (Gently.) Believe me, I take no credit to myself for

what I do, since I can never love another as I love the Due.
(*The BARONNE goes up stage to back.*)

MARQUISE. (*Irritably.*) This fancy of yours is what annoys me. You and Gaston have grown up from childhood together. You have persuaded yourself that this communion of existence ought to be perpetuated, that you could not be happy under any other conditions. All folly!

CLAIRE. Mother!

MARQUISE. You delude yourself in regard to the Due; (*CLAIRE approaches the MARQUISE.*) he is fickle and frivolous. You know quite well that his independent habits are almost beyond correction; (*CLAIRE pauses, left of table.*) and if you will permit me to say so, I should experience no regret were this marriage broken off. (*BARONNE comes down and sits upon sofa.*)

CLAIRE. (*With emotion.*) Mother, this is the first time that you have spoken thus to me. It would seem that you are preparing me to hear some bad news. Is it true, then, that there is a motive for the absence of the Due? Have you heard—

MARQUISE. Nothing, my child. I am only astonished at this prolonged silence,—that seems more than diplomatic.

CLAIRE. (*Falling upon her knees at right side of MARQUISE.*) Practise a little patience, dear mother; doubtless the Due is planning a surprise for us in arriving quite unexpectedly from St. Petersburg.

MARQUISE. I trust so, my daughter, since you desire it. (*CLAIRE rises and goes up stage to casement. The BARONNE rises and goes to right of table.*)

BARONNE. In any case, upon his arrival from Paris to-day, my husband will probably be better informed.

CLAIRE. Here comes my brother along the terrace with Monsieur Bachelin. (*The BARONNE goes up stage behind the sofa. The MARQUISE rises and comes down to centre.*)

[Enter, by casement, OCTAVE DE BEAULIEU in hunting costume, followed by BACHELIN.]

OCTAVE. Come in, Monsieur Bachelin. (*He pauses, l., to allow BACHELIN to pass him.* BACHELIN enters, salutes CLAIRE and the BARONNE, and comes down to centre. *The BARONNE comes down, r., while CLAIRE comes down between BACHELIN and the BARONNE.* OCTAVE comes down to left of MARQUISE, passing to left of table, upon which he leaves his hat.)

BACHELIN. Mesdames,—Madame la Marquise, my compliments.

[A servant enters, takes the easy-chair which is to right of casement, places it outside upon the terrace, and disappears.]

MARQUISE. Good-morning, my dear Bachelin. (*To OCTAVE.*) You made an early start; I did not hear you. Have you had any sport?

OCTAVE. Yes, mother,—thanks to Monsieur Derblay, who conducted me through his preserves.

MARQUISE. So the iron-master has won *yor* over to his side, has he?

OCTAVE. Mother, it would be impossible to find a more agreeable companion. He tells me that he proposes to call here during the day with his sister, who has just returned from the convent, and whom he begs leave to present to *yor* (*Gives up stage to left of table.*)

MARQUISE. My dear Bachelin, 'tis an age since we have seen *yon*.

BACHELIN. I have been extremely busy, Madame la Marquise; have had a somewhat important affair in hand,—in the sale of La Varenne. (*The Marquise goes up stage to chair which is at right of table. OCTAVE comes down L.*)

OCTAVE. Ah! Then the d'Estrelles have secured a purchaser at last?

BACHELIN. Ay, and one who has paid them a goodly price, I assure you. He seemed determined to possess the property. He is some wholesale manufacturer from Paris,—claims the honor of being acquainted with the family of Madame la Marquise, which probably accounts for his seeking a residence in the neighborhood of Beaulieu.

MARQUISE. May I know the name of this gentleman?

BACHELIN. He calls himself Monsieur Moulinet.

BARONNE. (*Rising.*) Monsieur Moulinet!

CLAIRE. The father of Athénaïs. (*She passes behind the BARONNE, who approaches BACHELIN, and sits upon sofa.*)

BARONNE. Of course he knows us! (*BACHELIN goes up to place his hat and the portfolio he carries upon the piano; then comes down.*) His daughter was our comrade at the convent,—our adversary and rival as well. (*She sits upon sofa beside CLAIRE, the MARQUISE sits in chair right of table, and OCTAVE turns up stage to left of table.*) It was one incessant series of quarrels and battles between us. The girls were divided into two camps; one comprising the *bourgeoisie*; the other, the nobility. One faction was marshalled by Mademoiselle Moulinet; the other by Mademoiselle de Beaulieu. A most malicious distribution of forces, which led to abuse and vituperation *ad libitum*.

BACHELIN. The world in miniature!

BARONNE. However, though horribly vindictive, Athénaïs was wonderfully pretty and very intelligent. Unless time has materially mellowed her temper, should you see her cast herself upon the neck of either of us, rest assured that she does so with the intent either of biting or strangling us.

BACHELIN. And is Monsieur Moulinet wealthy?

BARONNE. Ridiculously wealthy.—Why, it was he who built that immense chocolate factory at Villepinte. It appears that he has discovered some process of making vanilla from coal,

and cacao from burnt almonds, which alimental chemistry has made a millionaire of him.—And here he is installed our neighbor, and proposes to play the lord of the manor! Poor man! He'll be taken for his own gardener!

MARQUISE. Under such circumstances, one must do the best one can.—(OCTAVE comes down L.) But let us dismiss Monsieur Moulinet. You came without doubt, my dear Bachelin, to consult me upon our suit in England?

BACHELIN. (With a glance at OCTAVE, then at CLAIRE.) Yes, Madame la Marquise. (CLAIRe and the BARONNE rise.)

BARONNE. We will leave you, Aunt. (CLAIRe and BARONNE go up stage and exeunt at back.)

MARQUISE. (Rising.) Octave, see that the carriage is sent to the station to meet the Baron.

OCTAVE. Yes, mother.

[Exit by door, L.

MARQUISE. (Coming down R., in front of sofa, while BACHELIN comes down L.) Well, my dear Bachelin?

BACHELIN. (Anxiously.) Bad news, Madame la Marquise, which is the cause of the liveliest regret to me, old servant of your family as I am. The law-suit undertaken during his lifetime by the late Monsieur le Marquis de Beaulieu, your husband, has been gravely compromised.

MARQUISE. (After a pause.) You are not telling me all the truth, Bachelin. Were there still a ray of hope, you would not be so dispirited. The courts have decided? The suit is lost?

BACHELIN. Alas, yes, Madame la Marquise! (The MARQUISE sits upon sofa and BACHELIN advances to centre.) The case has been poorly managed, and the loss of the suit has been a terrible blow to the house of Beaulieu.

MARQUISE. Terrible indeed, since it implies the ruin of both my son and my daughter.

BACHELIN. (Passing to left of couch.) Fortunately this financial wound is not mortal, and—(He pauses.) had it been only that—

MARQUISE. What else is there? (Glances at BACHELIN with much anxiety.) You have news of the Due de Bligny? (She rises.)

BACHELIN. Yes, Madame la Marquise,—in consequence of your request that I should inquire into the movements of Monsieur your nephew. Here, then, are such tidings as have been transmitted:—Monsieur le Due de Bligny has been in Paris for the last six weeks.

MARQUISE. Six weeks! And we knew nothing of it!

BACHELIN. (Coming down a little to L.) Monsieur your nephew took very good care that you should know nothing of it.

MARQUISE. And he has not come to us! He refuses to come, knowing the reverse which has befallen us! For of course he knows it, does he not?

BACHELIN. He was among the first to be made aware of the facts, Madame la Marquise.

MARQUISE. Ah, you are right, Bachelin; this second blow strikes deeper than the first. The Duc has abandoned us. (BACHELIN turns up stage.) His aim was our fortune. Now that the fortune has vanished, the lover disappears. (Crosses stage to table.) Money is the watchword of this mercenary, covetous epoch. Virtue, beauty, and intelligence are at a discount. One is no longer worthy of notice unless the length of his purse exceeds that of the list of his good qualities. Being threatened with poverty, we are scarcely known (MARQUISE comes down L.); at least, no longer recognized. (BACHELIN comes down centre.)

BACHELIN. Madame la Marquise, I believe you abuse our epoch a little. No doubt very material ideas predominate in these days, (MARQUISE comes to left of BACHELIN) but there still exist disinterested men in whose eyes beauty, virtue, and intelligence are attributes that render a woman enviable before all others. I do not say that I am acquainted with a superfluity of such men, but I do know one such example at least, and in this connection that one suffices.

MARQUISE. (Going to left of table) What do you mean?

BACHELIN. Simply this,—I number among my friends a gallant gentleman who, upon meeting Mademoiselle de Beaulieu, has lost his heart to her. Being aware of her engagement to the Duc, he would not venture to make known his sentiments; but were he to know that she is free, he would speak, provided you deigned to permit him to do so.

MARQUISE. It is of Monsieur Philippe Derblay you speak, is it not?

BACHELIN. Yes, Madame la Marquise.

MARQUISE. (Coldly.) I am not ignorant of the sentiments my daughter has inspired in this iron-master, since he has taken no care to conceal them.

BACHELIN. Ah, but he loves Mademoiselle Claire sincerely. (MARQUISE comes down L.) You do not know Monsieur Derblay sufficiently well, Madame la Marquise, to be able to judge of his worth.

MARQUISE. I am aware that he is held in high esteem in the neighborhood. (Turns up stage to left of table, while BACHELIN goes R.)

BACHELIN. Ay, and justly so. (MARQUISE seats herself at left of table.) I have known Monsieur Philippe and his sister, Mademoiselle Suzanne, from early childhood. Their father called me his friend, which will explain, Madame la Marquise, the assurance with which I make known to you Monsieur Derblay's sentiments. (Sits upon chair at right of table.) In my sight, my client possesses but one fault: his name is not enrolled among the nobility. And yet, who knows what a thor-

ough search might bring forth? His family is an ancient one. During the Revolution names became considerably corrupted, and the mere dropping of an apostrophe did not count.

MARQUISE. Let him preserve the name he bears! He is a man of honor, and that is sufficient in these days.

BACHELIN. Monsieur Derblay would indeed be happy, Madame, could he hear you.

MARQUISE. Nevertheless, repeat nothing to him of what I am about to say to you. Mademoiselle de Beaulieu would countenance no generosity in any man; and considering the character she possesses, I am inclined to believe that she will go to her grave a celibate. I pray God only that this double blow which has fallen upon her will find her strong and resigned!

BACHELIN. Madame la Marquise, were I permitted to offer you my advice, I would urge the expediency of saying nothing whatever as yet to Mademoiselle de Beaulieu. There is always time enough for her to suffer.

MARQUISE. You are right, my friend. But as to my son, I ought in duty to apprise him of our misfortune. (*She touches the bell. A servant appears.*) Ask Monsieur le Marquis to come to me. [*Exit servant.*]

BACHELIN. Whatever may happen, Madame la Marquise, remember that Monsieur Derblay would account himself the happiest of men, were he ever permitted to hope. (*Both rise.*) He will wait, for his heart is staunch, unwavering. (*The MARQUISE comes down R.; BACHELIN comes down L.*)

[Enter OCTAVE by door L., and comes down between the MARQUISE and BACHELIN.]

OCTAVE. Well?

MARQUISE. My boy, I have grave tidings for you,—tidings which have caused me the keenest pain.

OCTAVE. Concerning the suit?

MARQUISE. Yes.

OCTAVE. (*Calmly.*) Is it lost?

MARQUISE. You knew it, then?

OCTAVE. I mistrusted so. I have respected your illusions, mother, but I was perfectly convinced that our cause was untenable. I dreaded the result for my sister only, whose dowry is at stake. Fortunately, however, we possess a very simple means of adjusting the difficulty. You shall give her that portion of your private fortune which you had reserved for me. And as for me, rest assured that I am able to take care of myself.

MARQUISE. My noble boy! (*Sits upon sofa.*) Come, let me embrace you!

OCTAVE. (*Kneeling at left side of MARQUISE.*) I love my sister, and shall do all in my power to render her happy. (*OCTAVE rises, takes MARQUISE's hand and leads her down centre.*) But while we are speaking of this sad business, (*To BACHELIN, who*

remains apart.) tell me, do you suspect any connection between the silence of our cousin, de Bligny, and the loss of our suit?

MARQUISE. (*Nervously.*) Octave, the Due—

OCTAVE. (*Smiling.*) Oh, do not be alarmed, mother. If Gaston hesitates to keep his engagement, now that Mademoiselle de Beaulieu is poor, I fancy we are not the people to take him by the nape of his neck and dictate his duty to him. In the event of the Due de Bligny not marrying my sister, I consider that it will be so much the worse for him, and so much the better for her.

MARQUISE. Well said! (*BACHELIN approaches OCTAVE.*)

BACHELIN. Bravo, Monsieur le Marquis! If Mademoiselle de Beaulieu is not rich enough to tempt a fortune-hunter, she is sufficiently a charming woman to attract a man of honor.

MARQUISE. Hush! Not another word!—She is here. (*BACHELIN and OCTAVE advance L. The MARQUISE goes R. and pauses beside the sofa.*)

[Enter CLAIRE and the BARONNE by door L., followed by the BARON DE PRÉFONT. CLAIRE comes down and pauses a little to left of sofa, the BARONNE comes down to foreground L. and pauses to right of OCTAVE, while the BARON comes down to centre to join the MARQUISE.]

CLAIRe. Mother, here is the Baron.

BARON. (*Saluting.*) My dear Aunt,—Good morning, Octave. (*OCTAVE turns up stage to left of table, passes behind it and joins the BARON, R. CLAIRE comes down R. passing behind the sofa, and joins the MARQUISE in the foreground.*)

MARQUISE. Have you had a pleasant journey, nephew?

BARON. Charming,—a trifle warm,—but charming. (*OCTAVE retrieves the BARON of the valise he carries and turns up stage to right of table.*)

BARONNE. Have you executed all my commissions?

BARON. Every one, my dear.

BARONNE. My hats—

BARON. Are in the large black trunk.

BARONNE. And the four trunks?

BARON. The break groans beneath the burden. (*To OCTAVE.*) Three hundred kilos excessive weight! I fancy my wife has clandestinely transported the entire artillery service.

BARONNE. (*Anxiously.*) And the jewel-case?

BARON. Has not left me for an instant. My life is responsible for its safety.

BARONNE. (*Taking the valise which the BARON carried.*) Very well! I am content; kiss my hand.

BARON. With pleasure.

BARONNE. (*Aside.*) Have you any news?

BARON. (*Aside.*) I am crammed full. Take Claire and Octave away.

BARONNE. (*Passing to right of BARON, who joins BACHELIN in foreground L., and shakes hands with him.*) Claire, will you come and assist me to unpack?

CLAIRE. With all my heart! (*Turns up stage to right of sofa and goes to door R.*)

BARONNE. Here, Octave, take this and treat it respectfully. (*Gives OCTAVE the valise. OCTAVE turns up stage and joins CLAIRE at door R.*) They are the crown-diamonds! (*To MARQUISE.*) My husband has some news for you. (*The BARONNE joins CLAIRE and OCTAVE, and all three exult by door R. The BARON turns up stage to left of table and places his hat behind the jar of flowers.*)

BACHELIN. (*As though about to retire.*) Madame la Marquise, I—

MARQUISE. Remain, Bachelin. (*She crosses foreground L., and BACHELIN comes down to L. of sofa.*) You are one of the family. (*She sits.*) Well, nephew, speak; you need not prepare me.—I already know that the Duc de Bligny has been in Paris for the last six weeks.

BARON. (*Coming down stage.—Bitterly.*) So, then, you have been informed of that, Marquise? But do you also know that he is about to be married?

MARQUISE. (*Rising in amazement.*) To be married!

BARON. Yes, my dear Aunt. Pardon my frankness, but I felt that in such a matter there was no occasion to beat about the bush.

MARQUISE. (*Dropping into easy-chair.*) To be married!

BARON. The Duc has done all in his power to prevent the affair from being noised abroad, but his future father-in-law, who, it appears, is a man of excessive vulgarity, has seen no reason to be so discreet. The fellow exults in calling his daughter a duchess. (*He seats himself upon the ottoman and BACHELIN comes down centre.*) Scarcely arrived from St. Petersburg, the Duc took a hand in a game of baccara, which has been much in vogue at a certain club for some time. Ill-luck attended his venture, and he soon found himself at the end of his resources, which at best were meagre. He had recourse to the bank of the club and continued to play with such desperation that at the close of the first week his indebtedness amounted to two hundred and fifty thousand francs. He completely lost his head and continued to play like a madman. In two nights he regained all that he had lost, then lost one hundred thousand francs, and at last came to a standstill, two hundred and fifty thousand francs in debt.

BACHELIN. It was about time!

BARON. I should say so, especially as Gaston had not a sou to his name to cover his obligations! The situation was critical. Why, in Heaven's name, the Duc did not turn to his family for assistance I know not; either he did not think or did not wish to. Then it was that Providence intervened in the

shape of his future father-in-law, whom, I am informed, Gaston had met but once before, and then only casually. This gentleman took the affair in hand and addressed de Bligny something after this fashion:—Monsieur le Duc, you owe two hundred and fifty thousand francs, which you must secure during the day, yet you have no prospect of so doing. These two hundred and fifty thousand francs, I will place at your disposal. I have an immense fortune, and being able to give ten millions as dowry to my only daughter, I have no wish to see the name of one of the noblest families in the land compromised for the sake of ten thousand miserable louis.

BACHELIN. Prodigious!

BARON. (*Rising.*) It is a fact, just as I state it. (*He comes down to L. of BACHELIN.*) The unfortunate de Bligny was dazzled; he fancied himself to be in the presence of a man of gold. The strong-box of his unexpected benefactor lay open before him. He thrust in his finger, his hand followed, and, as though caught in a gear, he went in heels over head, honor and all! (*The MARQUISE remains an instant in silence, then bursts into sobs and covers her face with her handkerchief. The BARON and BACHELIN hasten to her to console her.*)

BACHELIN. Madame la Marquise!

MARQUISE. Stay! The tears relieve me! This blow has quite unnerved me. I loved Gaston so! have reared him so carefully, have been a second mother to him! And this is how he recompenses me! Oh, the ingrate, ingrate!

BARON. (*Taking MARQUISE's left hand while BACHELIN steps behind the table.*) My dear Aunt!

MARQUISE. It is all over now! (*Rises, firmly.*) Our attitude toward Claire is the all-important question now. You know how proud, how passionate she is. (*She comes down R. in front of sofa, the BARON centre, BACHELIN L.*) Her father was so before her; a heart of gold, but a head of iron. She spoke of Gaston scarcely an hour since. It will be like a thunder-bolt falling out of a clear heaven!

BARON. My dear Aunt, do you not think that some application might be made to de Bligny? He has been carried away; perhaps it might be possible to win him back to reason. If you consent, I shall be happy to place myself at your disposal.

MARQUISE. No; we are not people to humiliate ourselves and implore. Our position, sad as it is, is unsullied and dignified. I do not propose to change it.

BARON. Then happen what may, you shall pursue your noble conduct, and though you may have occasion to weep in secret, you will never have cause to blush before any living man. (*Shakes hands with MARQUISE.*) I cannot say so much for de Bligny. (*He goes to table, takes his hat and gloves, and comes down a few steps.*)

[*A servant enters at back and comes down.*]

SERVANT. Monsieur and Mademoiselle Derblay beg to know if Madame la Marquise will receive them.

MARQUISE. Oh! At such a time! (BACHELIN makes a gesture of supplication.) Well, so be it! (To Sarrant.) I will receive the lady and gentleman here. [Servant exits at back.]

BARON. (Coming down centre.) My dear Aunt, I am positively unpresentable; am covered with dust from head to foot. *Exit*.

MARQUISE. I will excuse you under the circumstances; but be good enough to inform Claire and Octave that Monsieur Derblay and his sister are here.

[Exit BARON by door R. The MARQUISE sits upon sofa. The servant enters at back, and pauses R.]

SERVANT. (Announcing.) Monsieur and Mademoiselle Derblay!

[Enter PHILIPPE DERBLAY and SUZANNE at back. They come down a few steps and pause, SUZANNE at left of PHILIPPE.]

PHILIPPE. Madame la Marquise—(He hesitates.) permit me to present my sister, Suzanne.

MARQUISE. My son has already announced the visit of Mademoiselle Derblay. I thank you, Monsieur, for having brought her to me. (She rises.) I trust that my gray hairs do not alarm you, my dear. Come, let me embrace you.

SUZANNE. (Coming to left of MARQUISE.) With all my heart, Madame.

PHILIPPE. (Coming down to right of table.) I know not how to thank you, Madame, for your friendly reception of my sister. The child has need of guidance and counsel, and nowhere could she find them in such perfection as by your side, if you will deign to do her the favor to interest yourself in her.

MARQUISE. (To PHILIPPE.) She is charming. Come, my child. (Turns up stage toward back with SUZANNE.) How long is it since you have left your convent?

[Exeunt both upon terrace and disappear R. PHILIPPE follows them with his eyes; then turns and goes to BACHELIN, who extends his hands to him.]

BACHELIN. Well, my boy, Mademoiselle Claire is not here; so I suppose you feel quite out of your element?

PHILIPPE. True, I find myself in a singular state. For the last fortnight, each time that I come here my heart beats at the thought of finding myself in the presence of Mademoiselle de Beaulieu, and yet I should die in despair did I think that I were not to see her. She disconcerts, intimidates me. When her eyes rest upon me, I feel like a frightened child.

BACHELIN. (Smiling.) You love her!

PHILIPPE. Of course it is a great piece of folly that I, a toiler upon the face of the earth, isolated from the world, should dare to raise my eyes to this young girl, so beautiful, so proud, and, perhaps, for that very reason, so seductive. I

find her grave, thoughtful, a trifle anxious, undoubtedly, at being so separated from her *fiancée*. And yet, despite myself, I love her. I have forgotten the abyss which divides us, have lost sight of the difference in our origins. To the voice of reason, to the counsel of experience I have closed my ears. (BACHELIN *nods assent.*) And now the evil is accomplished ; I no longer belong to myself, I am given over, heart and soul, to this passion, which fills me with a profound joy, a sweet delirium, granting me all except hope. (BACHELIN *makes a movement.*) There my folly balks,—I have no hope, I give you my word.

BACHELIN. Why not ?

PHILIPPE. Because I know the wish lacks the motive of attainment ; because Mademoiselle de Beaulieu has never done me the honor to notice that I exist. Because, in a word, she is noble, wealthy, the *fiancée* of her cousin, and will some day be a duchess.

BACHELIN. (*Crossing to PHILIPPE, R. of centre.*) Are you convinced of all this ? What would you say were I to tell you that Mademoiselle de Beaulieu is no longer wealthy, that she will probably not be a duchess, and that never had an honorable man a better opportunity of rendering himself agreeable in her eyes than you have at the present moment ?

PHILIPPE. (*Mored.*) Ah, take care ! Do not venture to pronounce such words in jest.

BACHELIN. Is such my habit ? (*Takes PHILIPPE by the arm, and leads him down centre.*) I am betraying a professional secret, but I do so in your favor. Mademoiselle de Beaulieu is ruined, though she is ignorant of the fact. The Due de Bligny has forsaken her, of which fact she is also unaware.

PHILIPPE. Ruined and forsaken ! Ah, what need has she of a fortune, when she is all that and more herself ?

BACHELIN. Exactly ; and it is beneath this aspect of disinterestedness that I have shown you up.

PHILIPPE. Oh, speak to Madame de Beaulieu for me—speak to Mademoiselle Claire !—Nay, do not speak at all ! She is proud and haughty. The least suspicion that she owed the slightest obligation to the man who would be her husband would cause her to shun, repel me. But prejudice the Marquise in my favor, beseech her to approve my scruples, and place me upon a firm footing, at least, with her. Oh, I would receive the hand of Mademoiselle de Beaulieu upon my knees, as the choicest gift of heaven. However, I wish her to believe that she is still wealthy, that she may be unbiassed in her acceptance or rejection of me. And were I, in marrying her, to make over to her my entire fortune, it would still be she who would be granting the indulgence.

BACHELIN. There, there ! Don't be precipitate. (*The MARQUISE and SUZANNE appear upon terrace at back.*) What a fine

thing it is to have youth and passion ! However, let us keep within the bounds of reason and await the course of events. (MARQUISE and SUZANNE enter, SUZANNE left of MARQUISE.) Therein resides the secret of the soundest policy. (He passes to L., followed by PHILIPPE. CLAIRE and OCTAVE enter by door R., followed by the BARONNE.)

MARQUISE. (Presenting CLAIRE and OCTAVE to SUZANNE.) My dear child, permit me to present my son, the Marquis de Beau-lieu;—my daughter Claire.

CLAIRe. (Taking a step forward and extending her hand to SUZANNE, who goes to her.) You are most welcome, Mademoiselle. (She bows to PHILIPPE, who turns upon hearing her speak. CLAIRE and SUZANNE come down before the sofa. The MARQUISE and BARONNE also come down, the former to L. of sofa, the latter behind it.)

SUZANNE. My brother has warned me in advance that I should admire you, Mademoiselle; and now that I have seen you, I feel that it will be easy for me to love you.

CLAIRe. And I love you already, Mademoiselle. (OCTAVE comes down centre to R. of table. The MARQUISE seats herself upon sofa with SUZANNE at her R. CLAIRE passes behind the sofa to R. of BARONNE.)

[Enter the BARON by door R. PHILIPPE turns up stage to L. of table.]

OCTAVE. My dear Monsieur Derblay, we have here a gentleman who, upon the industrial question, will be able to cope with you. (Presenting BARON, who comes down.) Monsieur le Baron de Préfont, a scholar—

BARON. Say, rather, a student, my dear Octave.

PHILIPPE. This is not by any means the first time that I have heard the name of the Baron de Préfont.

OCTAVE. (Gaily.) Ah, you see, Baron, your fame has preceded you into our mountain fastnesses ! That is what I call celebrity, my dear boy !

BARON. (Modestly.) In order to have discovered me, Monsieur must be a genuine explorer.

PHILIPPE. I beg your pardon, I have read your memoir addressed to the Academy of Sciences.

BARON. (Delighted.) Ah, indeed ? (He crosses to PHILIPPE. OCTAVE joins the MARQUISE at L. of sofa.) I am told that your establishment is one of great importance. Do you employ many workmen ?

PHILIPPE. Some two thousand.

BARON. Indeed ! And how many furnaces have you ?

PHILIPPE. Ten, in blast the year round.

BARON. You have a laboratory, of course. You are a chemist ? How delightful ! You are the most engaging man I have met

in many a day! (*Shakes hands with PHILIPPE.*) We will make some experiments together. My dear Monsieur, I account it a piece of genuine good fortune to have met you! (*Takes PHILIPPE's arm and leads him up stage upon the terrace, where BACHELIN joins them, all three remaining in view.*)

BARONNE. (*Passing behind OCTAVE and coming down a little to L.*) What is the matter with my husband?

OCTAVE. (*Turning up stage toward casement.*) He is only mounted upon his favorite hobby-horse, my dear cousin, and has taken Monsieur Derblay up on the crupper.

BARONNE. (*Crossing to L.*) They'll have a long ride of it, unless some one stops the Baron.

OCTAVE. Why should we stop him? For my part I find this fraternization between Monsieur Derblay and de Préfont in excellent taste. (*The BARONNE seats herself upon ottoman. OCTAVE comes to her side at R. of table.*) The one, scion of a valiant house, embodies ten ages of martial grandeur; the other, son of industry, represents that unique era which has produced steam, gas, and electricity. They affiliate, appreciate their value, and at once demonstrate that accord which renders a nation grand—the glory of the past hand in hand with the progress of the present!

BARONNE. (*Gaily.*) My dear Octave, you are a born advocate; you're an admirable speaker. (*OCTAVE turns up stage.*) But considering you the son of your father, I find you a trifle democratic.

OCTAVE. Ah, cousin, the democracy rules now-a-days. It is our duty to create an aristocracy out of this same democracy. If we are able, let us found an aristocracy of talent, which, after all, is the only one worthy to succeed the aristocracy of birth.

BARONNE. Fortune having given you the one, you propose to conquer the other? (*She rises.*) You are a little presumptuous. (*OCTAVE approaches the MARQUISE.*) Try to preserve what you have, my poor boy, and don't attempt to open the door to reformers. (*Comes down L., followed by OCTAVE.*)

BARON. (*Upon the terrace*) A carriage has just stopped at the gates. (*CLAIRE goes up to R. of casement. BACHELIN comes back of sofa.*)

MARQUISE. Our neighbors, the Lavardens, probably; this is their day.

[Enter a servant by door L. with a card upon a salver, which he presents to the MARQUISE.]

MARQUISE. (*Raising her eye-glass.*) Monsieur and Mademoiselle Moulinet. (*SUZANNE rises and crosses L. behind table. The BARON and PHILIPPE enter. OCTAVE crosses to R. of SUZANNE. PHILIPPE comes down to L. of SUZANNE, and the BARON*

advances to foreground L. of table. The BARONNE crosses to centre.)

BARONNE. Well, this I call going a little too far!

MARQUISE. What can these people want?

BACHELIN. Good heavens, Madame la Marquise, it is quite probable that Monsieur and Mademoiselle Moulinet, being newly installed in the neighborhood, consider it necessary to pay some visits.

BARONNE. I trust, Aunt, that you are not going to lend yourself to the familiarities of these Moulinets!

BARON. (Coming forward to L. of BARONNE.—Gently.) My dear, I fancy that your aunt does not stand in need of your advice. (The BARON and BARONNE come down L. The MARQUISE rises. PHILIPPE comes down to L. of table; the BARON joins him.)

MARQUISE. A most embarrassing position!

CLAIRE. (Coming down to L. of MARQUISE.) But, mother, we cannot close our doors upon them. They must have seen us upon the terrace from their carriage. To refuse to receive them would be equivalent to responding by impoliteness to a proceeding which, to all appearances, is courteous. Would it be worthy of us? We must receive them; and once the visit is over, there the matter ends.

MARQUISE. Yes, my child, you are right; we must do as you say. Say that we are at home. (CLAIRE turns up stage, and speaks to servant, who exits at back. The MARQUISE joins CLAIRE. The BARONNE turns up stage a little to R. BACHELIN follows her.)

BARONNE. (To OCTAVE.) Octave! (OCTAVE comes down to L. of BARONNE) You see what has happened—an example of your aristocracy of intelligence! Monsieur Moulinet is one of its choicest representatives. (OCTAVE laughs and turns up stage behind table to R. of SUZANNE; the BARONNE comes down and pauses L. in front of ottoman.)

[Enter the servant at back; the MARQUISE comes down, passing to L. of sofa.]

SERVANT. (Announcing.) Monsieur and Mademoiselle Moulinet. (Servant steps aside to R. Enter ATHÉNAÏS and MOULINET; the former goes to CLAIRE; the latter, having saluted all the personages to L., goes to BACHELIN. [Exit servant.

ATHÉNAÏS. (Vivaciously taking CLAIRE'S hands.) Ah! my dear Claire, how happy I am to see you!

CLAIRE. (Presenting ATHÉNAÏS to MARQUISE.) My mother— (The MARQUISE turns up stage to L. of sofa; ATHÉNAÏS advances to L. of her with CLAIRE at ATHÉNAÏS' R. centre.)

ATHÉNAÏS. I cannot express my great joy, Madame la Marquise, at finding myself again with Mademoiselle de Beaulieu. Ever since I have known her, and our acquaintance has been of long standing, (With an affectionate smile.) it has been my aim

to imitate her. And truly it would be difficult to find a more perfect model. (*The BARON, PHILIPPE, OCTAVE and SUZANNE turn up stage to casement and disappear upon the terrace*)

CLAIRE. (*Tranquilly.*) Imitate me! Indeed you are too modest! (*Crosses to back of chair at R. of table.*)

BARONNE. (*Aside.*) It is the first time that that idea has occurred to you!

— ATHÉNAÏS. (*Going to BARONNE.*) And my dear Sophie too! What a happy inspiration prompted me to call here to-day. (*MOULINET comes down to L. of MARQUISE, who seats herself upon sofa.* BACHELIN takes the chair which is between the piano and door R., places it L. of sofa and motions MOULINET to sit. CLAIRE rolls chair R. of table to L. of MOULINET and invites ATHÉNAÏS to sit; then, taking chair behind table, she seats herself next to ATHÉNAÏS. *The BARONNE sits upon ottoman.* BACHELIN turns up stage to casement.)

MOULINET. (*Seating himself.*) Mademoiselle de Beaulieu and Madame la Baronne were school-mates of my daughter at the Sacred Heart. I always did congratulate myself, and to-day more than ever, upon having sent Athénaïs to that establishment, which is, by all odds, the best in Paris.—The young folks receive a first-rate education there, besides making tip-top acquaintances.

MARQUISE. (*With a smile.*) So I perceive.

MOULINET. As for myself, Madame la Marquise, I am really touched by the favor you have done me in allowing me to present my respects to you.—Being a new-comer in the neighborhood, where I have bought a considerable property, I felt I ought to call, you know. (*MARQUISE and BACHELIN exchange a glance.*) Yes, I may say a very considerable property, being La Varenne, belonging to the d'Estrelles.—I can't say I should have thought of investing, but my daughter, who has a long head, gave me to understand that a rich man like me ought to have some land.

— ATHÉNAÏS. (*Uneasily.*) Father!

MOULINET. (*Aside to ATHÉNAÏS.*) Let me alone! (*Aloud.*) Besides, I must tell you, Madame la Marquise, that although my opinions are altogether liberal, my sympathies are entirely in favor of the aristocracy.

MARQUISE. Believe me, Monsieur, I am much impressed by the sentiments which you express with such frank simplicity.

MOULINET. (*Aside to ATHÉNAÏS.*) You see!

MARQUISE. They are worthy of a man who has attained to the position you hold by intelligence.

MOULINET. (*Carried away with delight.*) You've hit the nail on the head there! So, if my style suits you, Madame la Marquise, I hope we shall become the very best of neighbors.

BARONNE. (*Aside.*) Heavens, what a monster!

MOULINET. I suppose you know La Varenne well? You are

aware that it is a historical château? I inhabit the chamber where Charles V. slept. Yes, Madame la Marquise, I sleep in an imperial bed; but, bless your soul, I'm not one whit the prouder for that.

—ATHÉNAÏS. Father!

MOULINET. (*Aside to ATHÉNAÏS.*) Do let me alone! I'm getting along swimmingly!

—ATHÉNAÏS. Beg Madame la Marquise to show you the terrace. I am told the view from there is marvellous. (*Rises and turns up stage to casement.*)

MARQUISE. (*Aside.*) She calls off the dogs! (*Aloud.*) Certainly, with pleasure. (*They rise.* MOULINET places his chair behind the sofa, CLAIRE places hers behind the table, while ATHÉNAÏS moves hers to r. of table. MOULINET offers his arm to the MARQUISE, who accepts it after an instant's hesitation.)

MOULINET. The view at La Varenne is also exceptional, Madame la Marquise; and if you will do us the honor to visit us, we will compare. (*He leads MARQUISE off at back; they disappear L.* The BARONNE, who has turned up stage with ATHÉNAÏS, follows the MARQUISE and MOULINET. As CLAIRE is about to exit at back, ATHÉNAÏS arrests her upon the threshold.)

—ATHÉNAÏS. (*Pausing to r. of CLAIRE.*) Will you not remain a moment?

CLAIRe. Have you something to say to me?

—ATHÉNAÏS. Yes. (*They come down centre.*) You cannot doubt the pleasure I feel in finding myself free to chat with you once more. During the two years that have elapsed since our separation I have reflected much, and have seen something of the world. I have gained a little in experience, and my feelings have undergone a singular modification. We have not been exactly good friends in the past—

CLAIRe. But—

—ATHÉNAÏS. Oh, don't contradict me! I did not love you! I am free now to confess that I was jealous of you, and my dream, day and night, was to become your equal.

CLAIRe. My equal! Good heavens, what am I that you should seek to emulate me! Indeed you surpass me! Beauty, elegance, wealth—you have everything that heart could wish for.

—ATHÉNAÏS. True!—All, except a name!

CLAIRe. Well, a name may be purchased in these days. All grades are to be had according to price. If you have a fancy for the nobility, you have your pick. Your means certainly can secure a titled husband. (*Passes to L.*)

—ATHÉNAÏS. (*Repressing her anger.*) Of course.—Indeed, just at present the question of my marriage is under discussion.

CLAIRe. (*Ironically.*) I congratulate you sincerely.

—ATHÉNAÏS. It is not your congratulations that I seek.

CLAIRe. What, then?

— ATHÉNAÏS. Your advice.

CLAIRe. My advice? Upon what?

— ATHÉNAÏS. Upon the choice I am about to make.

CLAIRe. Really, you overwhelm me. The idea of your asking my advice upon your family affairs! I assure you it is quite embarrassing, since we are so slightly acquainted. Can you not release me?

ATHÉNAÏS. Impossible!

CLAIRe. I fail to understand you. (*She indicates chair at r. of table; she then turns up stage to l. of table.*)

— ATHÉNAÏS. (*Seating herself.*) Then listen; the subject is worthy your attention. The marriage in question is a very grand one, surpassing my wildest hopes. It involves a coronet.

CLAIRe. A royal coronet?

ATHÉNAÏS. (*Gravely.*) No! Only ducal. I can be a duchess!

CLAIRe. (*Starting.*) A duchess!—(*She pauses thoughtfully.*)

— ATHÉNAÏS. You do not inquire the name of my fiancé?

CLAIRe. (*Hesitating.*) I?—Why should I?

ATHÉNAÏS. But you ought to know it; it is my duty to tell you. He is called the Due de Bligny. (*CLAIRe recoils in horror and catches at the table for support. ATHÉNAÏS rises.*) Monsieur de Bligny is your relative, your friend from childhood. I am told that there is some talk of an engagement between you, and I have had the heart to come to you loyally, to warn you and consult you.

CLAIRe. (*Faintly.*) To consult me—upon what?

— ATHÉNAÏS. Upon the actual situation that exists between you and the Due. You must understand that, if it be true that you are engaged, you would have it in your power to accuse me of having stolen your lover. (*They come down, CLAIRe in front of table, ATHÉNAÏS centre.*) The Due has sought my hand in marriage, but I do not love him; I scarcely know him. Whether it be he or another, it makes no difference to me. (*Approaching CLAIRe.*) So be frank,—do you love him? Would my marriage with him offend or even displease you? Say but one word, and I swear to you that I will break the engagement.

CLAIRe. (*Moved to joy, but suddenly commanding herself.*) I thank you, but be assured I am a woman neither to be abandoned nor disdained. Had the Due been engaged to me, I do not believe he would have married another. ~~No!~~ Among children who are related it is the custom for the family to betroth and marry them in their mind's eye. Such is the folly of the early age; but one grows rapidly, wisdom intervenes, and the exigencies of life upset such projects. The Due has sought your hand in marriage, you say? Marry him. There would be much to be regretted were you not united. You are worthy of each other.

— ATHÉNAÏS. How happy you render me! Think,—my dream

is realized ! At last I shall be your relative, your equal,—and a duchess !

CLAIRe. (*Bitterly.*) All of which you merit.

—ATHÉNAÏS. Let me embrace you ! (*Attempts to embrace CLAIRe, who recoils.*) Be assured that you have in me a sincere and devoted friend ! (*The BARONNE appears at back.*)

CLAIRe. You have just given me ample proof of what you say.

BARONNE. (*Coming down a little to R.*) Well, what have you two been doing here for the last half-hour ?

—ATHÉNAÏS. (*Turning up stage.*) Only talking ! We have quite finished, and I am going to join my father. (*Exit by easement at back. The BARONNE comes down to front of sofa.*)

CLAIRe. (*Watching ATHÉNAÏS disappear; then coming precipitately to BARONNE.*) You knew that he was about to marry ! Why have you said nothing to me ?

BARONNE. Claire ! (*She goes L.*)

CLAIRe. (*Coming down R.*) Betrayed ! Abandoned ! and for her ! You have left me to learn it from her lips ! (*Returning to centre.*) She has stabbed me at her ease ! And you were her accomplices ! Is there not one among you who loves me ? (*Falls upon ottoman and leans, sobbing, upon the table.*)

BARONNE. (*Going to L. of CLAIRe.*) In mercy's name,—Claire, my darling ! You frighten me !

CLAIRe. (*Bursting into sobs.*) And he, he !—Oh, wretch that I am, wretch that I am !

[*Enter the MARQUISE, excitedly, at back.*]

MARQUISE. (*Coming down to R. of table, near CLAIRe.*) Good heavens ! my poor child !—(*Pausing.*) Claire !

CLAIRe. Have you heard it, mother ?

MARQUISE. Her father has just told me.

CLAIRe. Ah ! It is all over with me ! My life is broken ! This desertion will weigh upon me to the day of my death. Even if I should recover from the humiliation, were I so mad as to think of marrying, who would have me now ?

MARQUISE. Who ?—You have but to choose. Monsieur Derblay would accept your hand this very moment as the gift of heaven.

CLAIRe. (*Dashing away her tears.*) Monsieur Derblay !

MARQUISE. Yes. But I only mention him to reassure you, for who could approach you without loving you ? Shall we depart for Paris ? Or, shall we travel for a while ? Speak, I am ready to do anything that will comfort and console you. What is your wish ?

CLAIRe. (*In despair.*) Ah, how do I know ? I wish I could vanish this moment, flee from everybody, even from myself. I hate and despise everything ! Oh, if I could only die !

MARQUISE. Claire !

[Enter BACHELIN, excitedly, at back.]

BACHELIN. (Coming down.) Madame la Marquise, pardon me, but a most astonishing thing has happened! The Duc de Bligny has arrived!

CLAIRE. (Rising quickly.) He!

BACHELIN. Despite all that we could say to him, he insists upon seeing you. (Comes down to front of sofa.)

MARQUISE. (Turning up stage a little to R.) He shall be driven from the place as he deserves!

CLAIRE. No, mother, we cannot eject the Duc de Bligny.

MARQUISE. Why not?

CLAIRE. (Firmly.) Not for the world would I have him believe that I have suffered on account of his desertion. Anything rather than his pity! (She comes down, wipes her eyes, and turns up stage to R. of ottoman.) Receive him, mother. (Bitterly.) We can open our door to him, since we have not closed it upon his fiancee.

MARQUISE. But, my child—(CLAIRE goes to BACHELIN; the MARQUISE comes down to R. of table.)

CLAIRE. (To BACHELIN.) Detain the Duc for a moment, and beg Monsieur Derblay to come to me here.

[Exit BACHELIN at back, passing to R. of sofa.]

MARQUISE. Monsieur Derblay?

CLAIRE. (Resolutely.) Yes, mother.

MARQUISE. (Nervously.) But—

CLAIRE. You have told me that I should be free to dispose of myself. I beseech you to keep your word.

[Enter PHILIPPE DERBLAY at back, followed by BACHELIN, who remains in the background. PHILIPPE advances, with respectful timidity, to R. of table.]

CLAIRE. (To PHILIPPE.) Monsieur, our old friend, Monsieur Bachelin, has informed my mother that you would do me the honor to seek my hand in marriage. (PHILIPPE bows in silence.) I believe you to be an upright man. I presume that you are aware, as those about me must have been aware for some time, that the Duc de Bligny—

PHILIPPE. (Advancing with emotion.) Yes, Mademoiselle, I know it, but permit me to assure you, even at this moment, that did it depend upon me to insure your happiness by reconciling you to the Duc, I would not hesitate to do so, even at the cost of my life.

CLAIRE. I thank you; but all bonds between the Duc and myself are forever severed. The surest proof of which that I am able to give you is, that if you cherish the same sentiments toward me, I am ready to tender you my hand. (PHILIPPE advances and takes CLAIRE'S hand, which he kisses.)

PHILIPPE. (Transported.) Mademoiselle! Oh, how happy you render me!

BACHELIN. (At back.) The Duc ! (MOULINET is heard speaking to the DUC.)

CLAIRE. (Seeing PHILIPPE hesitate as to what he ought to do.) Remain, Monsieur. (PHILIPPE turns to MARQUISE, who makes a sign for him to remain, and takes her place to L. of CLAIRE. PHILIPPE comes down L. to R. of BARONNE.)

[Enter the DUC DE BLIGNY at back, followed by MOULINET. The DUC comes down centre; MOULINET comes down L., and pauses before ottoman.]

DUC. (Excitedly.) Madame la Marquise,—Claire,—you must see my annoyance, grief, regrets ! Only upon my arrival at La Varenne was I informed of this unprecedented proceeding.

MOULINET. But, Monsieur le Due—

DUC. (Haughtily.) This outrageous performance, in which I beg you to believe I have had no share. I have committed errors, (PHILIPPE turns up stage, L. of table, crosses at back and joins BACHELIN above sofa.) I have conducted myself with levity and ingratitude, but to have authorized such scandalous behavior in the bosom of my family,—no, upon my honor, I have not done that !

MOULINET. Why, it was only a simple social visit. I don't understand—

DUC. You can't understand. That is your only excuse !

MOULINET. If I have done wrong, son-in-law, I beg you to tell me how ; I'd like to make it up.

DUC. (Haughtily.) Enough, Monsieur ! (MOULINET turns up stage to L. of table.—To MARQUISE.) I owe you some explanation ; suffer me to give it. Claire, I will not leave this place until you have pardoned me.

CLAIRE. (With forced tranquillity.) But, Due, you owe us no explanation and stand in need of no pardon. (She crosses centre to R. of DUC. ATHÉNAÏS enters at back and comes down behind table.) We understand you are to be married. Certainly you possessed the right to dispose of yourself. Were you not as free as I was ?

DUC. (Stupefied) Claire !

CLAIRE. Your fiancée has just announced the happy news. Your example is so good that I have wished to profit by it. Monsieur Derblay—(PHILIPPE advances to R. of CLAIRE. SUZANNE and OCTAVE appear at back.) Gentlemen, permit me to present you to each other. (To PHILIPPE.) My cousin, Monsieur le Duc de Bligny. (To DUC.) Monsieur Derblay, my fiancé !

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*A small salon adjoining the nuptial chamber in the house of PHILIPPE DERBLAY, at Pont-Avesnes. Two doors, R. One door, L., also a window. Fireplace at back with fire burning. At either side of the chimney-piece a small sofa. Near the sofa R. a chair. An easy-chair, R. In the centre, between the two sofas, an ottoman. As the curtain rises, BRIGITTE is discovered upon the hearth-rug, kneeling and using the bellows. Enter SUZANNE by door R., and comes down centre.*

BRIGITTE. What! Mademoiselle Suzanne already back from church? Is the ceremony over?

SUZANNE. Yes, safely over; and I have left everybody in charge of our dear curé, to come and take a last glimpse. We are to have a new mistress in the house, Brigitte, and it behooves us to see that she is well pleased. (Arranges the drapery at the window.)

BRIGITTE. Eh! Bless your dear heart, why shouldn't she be pleased, with our Philippe ever at her side? I don't care how pretty the bird may be, the cage is fine enough.

SUZANNE. Scarcely fine enough. (Comes down L.)

BRIGITTE. It strikes me, Mademoiselle, that our new lady is a trifle odd. (Coming down centre.) The idea of being married at midnight, as if by stealth!

SUZANNE. I understand that such is the proper thing in the fashionable world, now-a-days.—But that fire is not going to burn. (Turns up stage and sits upon sofa, L. BRIGITTE follows her and arranges the fender.)

BRIGITTE. Oh, it's all right.—So Monsieur Philippe is married! And just to think, Mademoiselle, that in a year or two it will be your turn to turn the house topsy-turvy!

SUZANNE. (Blushing.) Fortunately there is no prospect of such a thing at present, Brigitte. (Comes down L.)

BRIGITTE. (Coming down centre.) Fortunately? Tell me, Mademoiselle, who was the fine gentleman who gave you his arm when you set off for church, and who has such a nice, thoughtful way about him?

SUZANNE. That is Monsieur Octave de Beaulieu, the brother of Mademoiselle Claire.

BRIGITTE. (Gaily.) Ah-ha! There's a proper lad for you, who has a nose for our orange-blossoms!

SUZANNE. (Turning away.) What nonsense! My dear girl, you don't know what you're talking about.

BRIGITTE. Hark ! There's a carriage in the court-yard !
(Runs to door R.)

SUZANNE. (Crossing R.) Are the guests already returning ?

BRIGITTE. Faith, not yet.—I only see your fine young cavalier. It hasn't taken him long to catch up with you ! (SUZANNE comes down L. Enter OCTAVE at door R., hesitates a moment, then comes down to R. of SUZANNE.) Walk right in, Monsieur, walk right in ! You're welcome. [Exit R.

SUZANNE. You must excuse the familiarity of Brigitte, Monsieur le Marquis.— You see, she has had the care of my brother and me from our infancy, and consequently considers the house her special domain.

OCTAVE. Her kind reception is precious in my eyes, if it reflects the attitude of its master and mistress toward me.

SUZANNE. How could it be otherwise ? Are you not now the brother of my brother ?

OCTAVE. True,—and almost yours, as well. Tell me, will you do me a favor ?

SUZANNE. If it is in my power.

OCTAVE. Give up calling me so solemnly Monsieur le Marquis ; treat me more as an intimate friend.

SUZANNE. If you wish it, I agree.

OCTAVE. Now then, as we are through with this marriage ceremonial, suppose we unbend a little.

SUZANNE. Ah, willingly ! Philippe is a trifle too grave for my fancy.

OCTAVE. You have been accustomed to regard him rather as your father.

SUZANNE. Yes, but as the tenderest of fathers. If you only knew how good he has been to me, what delicate care, what sweet attention he has lavished upon me as a child ; how many nights he has passed laboring for me,—always for me !—for I have been a serious embarrassment to him.

OCTAVE. You ?

SUZANNE. He was a mining-engineer, and a superb career lay open before him. But without the slightest hesitation he has turned his back upon all that and has gone into business in order to win a fortune for me. I should have been lost without him ; consequently I owe all to him. I love him profoundly, and it is the dearest wish of my heart that he may realize the happiness he so richly deserves.

OCTAVE. I envy him all that he can do for you. There is no sentiment so sweet as that of protection ! Happy indeed should I have been to have had a sweet, delicate sister to love and defend. What protection could I exercise over Claire ? It is she who protects me, with her strong, wilful character.

SUZANNE. So I have supposed. But she will love Philippe. He is so good ! You have not yet had the opportunity to ap-

preciate him at his just value. This marriage has been consummated so hastily!

OCTAVE. (*Laughing.*) So it appears.—The affair has come about like a note that is payable at a certain date, minus the three days' grace; (*Comes down R.*) the all-important point being that it should not go to protest.

[Enter the BARONNE like a whirlwind by door R., followed by the BARON.]

BARONNE. (*Seating herself upon sofa L.*, while the BARON pauses before sofa R.) Thank heaven, there is a fire here! That drive through the dark park and along the shore of that ghostly lake lighted so fitfully by the moon, has chilled me to the bone. I assure you, I'm a perfect iceberg!

MOULINET. (*Upon threshold of door, R.*) I hope I don't intrude?

BARON. Come in, Monsieur Moulinet.

[MOULINET enters and comes down to ottoman; the BARON crosses to chair near sofa L.]

MOULINET. My daughter has remained below with the bride, and I'm sure I haven't the faintest idea what has become of the Duc de Bligny. (*SUZANNE sits upon sofa R.*)

BARONNE. Oh, you need not be exercised on his account.

MOULINET. Had it not been for you, Monsieur le Baron, I declare I shouldn't have had a soul to speak to, and should have been taken for an intruder. (*Seats himself upon ottoman and enters into a conversation with the BARONNE.*)

OCTAVE. (*Aside.*) Upon my word, he is a mouthful! (*The BARON comes down to L. of OCTAVE and takes his arm; together they cross to L. of foreground.*) It appears that you have made yourself indispensable to the happiness of this father-in-law that is to be.

BARON. He adores me, refuses to give me a moment to breathe, actually appends himself to my coat-tails.—All the same, he is a sly-boots with his simple airs.

OCTAVE. That he has forced himself in here to-night is ample proof of what you say.

BARON. Ah, but the Duc is here also.

OCTAVE. We hesitated to ask him.—It was Monsieur Derblay himself who insisted upon the invitation.

BARON. He is a sensible man.—As for this fellow Moulinet, Bachelin has been telling me about the projects he cherishes, and which have influenced him to install himself in this part of the country.

OCTAVE. Projects? What are they?

BARON. Wait,—you shall hear. (*Turns up stage and seats himself in easy-chair L.* OCTAVE goes up stage to L. of sofa L.) Well, Monsieur Moulinet, it seems you are going to endow the district with a journal?

MOULINET. (*Turning.*) Ah! Has it already been talked about? Yes, Monsieur le Baron, I propose to call it *La France du Jura*. You see, it appeared to me to be my duty to consecrate a portion of my fortune to the enlightenment of my fellow-citizens.

BARON. (*Aside.*) ~~Or to their hood-winking!~~ (*Aloud.*) And what policy do you propose to pursue in your paper?

MOULINET. Now, that's a delicate question:—I'm a conciliatory sort of fellow, I am, and have no hankering after shake-ups with anybody.

BARON. In other words, you prefer to make an ally of everybody.

MOULINET. That's about the ticket! And so, in order to affirm my principles, I have presented the Municipal Council of La Varenne with money enough to build a lay-school, and have given the *Curé* the sum necessary to restore the church.

BARON. At that rate, everybody ought to be satisfied.

MOULINET. And I have chosen for *La France du Jura* a kind of a good, medium policy,—that won't hurt the feelings of either party.

BARON. I see!—Something similar to setting the words of the *Marseillaise* to “God save the Queen.”

BARONNE. An excellent plan, Monsieur Moulinet.

MOULINET. Well, it struck me it might go! Between the two extremes in politics there are a lot of timid sheep that you may just as well gather into your fold as not. They don't know what they want, and there is no reason under the sun why you shouldn't show them.

BARON. Better and better. You appeal to all fools! (*Rising and coming down L.*) You will secure the majority.

MOULINET. (*Laughing and rising.*) I hope so.—Ah! Here comes my son-in-law! (*Goes up to fire-place, where the BARONNE, SUZANNE, and OCTAVE are grouped. Enter the DUC DE BLIGNY by door R., and advances as far as ottoman. OCTAVE comes down to L. of DUC.*)

OCTAVE. Do you come from the salon, Due?—Has everybody arrived?

DUC. Yes, a moment since.

SUZANNE. Then I'm going to join my brother.

OCTAVE. I will accompany you.

[*Exeunt SUZANNE and OCTAVE by door R.*

BARONNE. What a charming couple they make! (*MOULINET joins the BARON, who turns up stage L. to R. of easy-chair.*)

DUC. (*Seating himself in chair before sofa to R. of fire-place.*) I have been down stairs with the family, but when the congratulating and kissing began, I made up my mind I was in the way, and after hunting about through an endless suit of rooms, I have found my way in here.

BARONNE. (*Approaching* DUC.) And have you an idea where you are?—This is the salon adjoining the nuptial chamber.

DUC. (*With affected calmness.*) Ah! That's funny. (*Rises and comes down R., with the BARONNE at his L.*)

BARONNE. You seem melancholy, Bligny. *Baron down S.*

DUC. Well, I suppose I feel as bored as the contracting parties must be.

MOULINET. (*Offended.*) Monsieur le Duc!

BARON. My word of honor, I never passed a more disagreeable day in all my life than my wedding-day!

BARONNE. (*To Baron.*) Thank you. *With Gaspard*

MOULINET. (*To BARONNE, gallantly.*) Monsieur le Baron refers only to the day! (*Laughing.*) In my time that day was considered the most delightful of a man's life! It is true that formerly a wedding was a gay affair; while now-a-days folks are married at midnight, in a sepulchral church where the chill falls upon one's shoulders like a leaden mantle. (*BARONNE turns up stage and sits upon sofa L. of fire-place.*) I must say I don't understand the fashion. Now, in three weeks' time I shall conduct my daughter to the altar; the ceremony takes place at La Madeleine, and I've ordered a musical Mass, the highest-priced singers for choruses, solos,—

DUC. Soli!

MOULINET. Well, solos or soli, it's all the same to me. (*DUC turns up stage to fire-place.*) There will be chants executed by the artists from the Opera, and everything first-class. Flowers inside and outside the church, green shrubs ranged along the steps, and an Aubusson carpet spread down to the Boulevard.

BARON. (*Aside.*) And probably all the way into the omnibus office.

MOULINET. I propose to have a regular nuptial Mass! (*BARONNE rises.*) But the ceremony of this evening!—it was uncanny. In the obscurity the bride under her white veil looked like a spectre, while the company seemed like a conclave of misty spooks! Brrou! (*He shoulders and crosses to R. The BARON crosses to L.*)

BARONNE. (*To DUC.*) I must confess that the tones of the organ produced a horrible effect upon me, and when they began to sing (*She comes down centre with DUC at her R.*) the tears rushed to my eyes. I was completely overwhelmed with sadness, accompanied by presentiments—

BARON. Oh, you're altogether too impressionable.

BARONNE. Had it not been for my vinaigrette, I should have been positively ill.

MOULINET. And then, too, I wish to call your attention to the fact, without seeking to offend anybody, that there wasn't a scrap of supper prepared for the guests!

DUC. (*Severely.*) Monsieur Moulinet!

MOULINET. Among our folks a wedding of that sort is called

a dry splice. (To DUC.) Just you wait till you see the dinner I'm going to give you on your wedding-day! One hundred covers at eighty francs a head! Nobody shall go away, like tonight, and say he's been fed on wind.

DUC. Monsieur Moulinet, you talk too much. For the sake of our own interests, I beg you to be less expansive.

MOULINET. But, son-in-law—

DUC. (Dryly.) In the first place, I am not yet your son-in-law.

MOULINET. Oh, that's all right! You've my word—

DUC. And when I am, don't address me as such. In fact, don't address me at all, if you can help it. (He passes before MOULINET and crosses to R. of BARONNE.)

MOULINET. (Vexed.) Monsieur le Duc! (Aside.) I'm in for a fine time of it with my revolutions! God bless my soul, I never shall be the equal of these people!

[Enter ATHÉNAÏS by door R. The DUC turns up stage to fire-place. The BARONNE passes to L. of easy-chair.]

ATHÉNAÏS. I come to announce the bride! (Crosses to MOULINET, R.) We must leave here in a few minutes.

MOULINET. I'll go and order the carriage.

[Enter CLAIRE in her wedding-robés leaning upon the arm of OCTAVE, by door R. CLAIRE approaches easy-chair L. The BARON turns up stage and pauses to L. of ottoman just as CLAIRE and OCTAVE pass it. Enter the MARQUISE and SUZANNE, followed by BACHELIN, who pauses a moment R. to speak to MOULINET on his way to exit R. ATHÉNAÏS advances to sofa R. of fire-place and sits. BACHELIN turns up stage near sofa R. On the same side the BARON takes his place near the DUC after OCTAVE has answered him. When CLAIRE reaches the easy-chair, she sits.]

BARON. Where is Monsieur Derblay? *meet 20 '88*.

OCTAVE. Seeing our friends into their carriages. (Turns up stage to join the DUC and BARON. BACHELIN comes down R.)

MARQUISE. (To CLAIRE.) How do you feel, my child?

CLAIRE. Quite well. (The MARQUISE crosses R. to L. of BACHELIN. SUZANNE advances to CLAIRE's side and relieves her of her veil and wreath.)

MARQUISE. (Aside to BACHELIN.) Have you fulfilled my request?

BACHELIN. Yes, Madame la Marquise. Following your instructions, I told Monsieur Philippe that when the marriage had been concluded it seemed to you to be but just to acquaint Madame Derblay with the true condition of her fortune, and to inform her at once of her ruin and the disinterestedness of her husband. But I must tell you that I found Monsieur Philippe stoutly opposed to any such revelation. (SUZANNE

crosses and goes off by door r.) He refuses to have his young wife cross the threshold of his house in the belief that she is less well off than she was formerly. (OCTAVE comes down to r. of CLAIRE.) And he charges me to beseech you to renounce your project.

MARQUISE. I must confess he astonishes me more and more. He possesses a breadth of insight and an elevation of character that are surprising. He is truly an extraordinary man.

BACHELIN. As I had the honor of telling you, Madame la Marquise, when I spoke to you of him for the first time.

MARQUISE. Yes. He is a true gentleman. We have made a happy choice. (CLAIRE rises.) Let us hope that my daughter will know how to appreciate him as sincerely as we do. (OCTAVE joins MARQUISE and BACHELIN.) But see how very pale she is! (The DUC comes down to r. of CLAIRE. The BARONNE turns up stage to sofa l.)

DUC. (To CLAIRE.) Claire, be generous:—tell me that you pardon me. (OCTAVE and the MARQUISE turn up stage to fire-place. ATHÉNAÏS rises. BACHELIN turns up stage to sofa r. SUZANNE enters and crosses to window where OCTAVE joins her.)

CLAIRE. (Glancing firmly at DUC.) All is forgotten. I love my husband.

DUC. (With a smile.) I only hope you are sincere in saying so.

CLAIRE. (Passing before DUC and turning up stage to fire-place, where the BARONNE joins her.) Adieu, DUC.

DUC. Au revoir, Claire. (Comes down r. The BARON, leaving the group at fire-place, joins him.)

BARON. Well, are you going, DUC? *down l. of DUC.*

DUC. (Lightly.) Yes. I have nothing further to do here. It is the husband's turn now.

BARON. Ah-ha, you seem a trifle bitter. Come now, admit that you regretted to see Claire married.

DUC. Regretted? Do you fancy me that sort of man?

BARON. My dear boy, that is a very pretentious response.—But, since you consider yourself such a conqueror, what do you think of Monsieur Derblay? Think you he has the appearance of a man who would allow his wife to be trifled with?

[Enter MOULINET by door r., and joins BACHELIN.]

DUC. (Scornfully.) Pshaw! Ever since Vulcan's time, no blacksmith has had a show!

BARON. All the same, I caution you to look out for the hammer! *Turns up stage to chimney-place.* The DUC shrugs his shoulders in silence and meets MOULINET, who comes down to l. of DUC.)

DUC. We will leave here when you are ready.

MOULINET. I'm not the one that's keeping you. What a reception! I counted upon meeting the entire gentry of the

country side, and there's not so much as a cat here ! (ATHÉNAÏS leaves the group before the fire place with CLAIRE ; they come down together, CLAIRE to L.)

ATHÉNAÏS. You have nothing left to desire.—You love and are loved in return. Promise me that you will think of me in your joys and sorrows,—one always has some of the latter, no matter how favored one may be. (The MARQUISE goes to L. of chair which is before sofa R. The DUC approaches her and kisses the hand she gives him.) Be sure that I shall share them, if only in spirit.

CLAIRe. I appreciate your friendship at its just value. But happiness seeks no confidants ; I shall be happy without mentioning it.

— ATHÉNAÏS. (Smiling.) I shall come to see you very soon. (Aside.) Indomitable spirit ! (She takes MOULINET's arm and exits R., followed by the DUC, the BARON and BACHELIN.)

CLAIRe. (Trembling with suppressed emotion.) They shall not see me weep !

MARQUISE. (Coming down to R. of CLAIRE.) Well, my darling, the time has come for me to leave you. My rôle of mother is over ; you are mistress of your own future. Have I not done all in my power, all that depended upon me to render you happy ?

CLAIRe. (With effort.) Yes, dearest mother.—Have no anxiety, no inquietude upon that score. (In choking tones.) Ah, do not unnerve me ! Can you not see—Go, go ; leave me. I will see you to-morrow ! (OCTAVE comes down to R. of MARQUISE and offers her his arm. CLAIRE embraces the MARQUISE. Exeunt OCTAVE and MARQUISE by door R.—Aside.) I am stifling ! (The BARONNE comes down to L. of CLAIRE, SUZANNE to R.)

SUZANNE. Sister, it is a popular belief in this province that a flower taken from a bride's bouquet insures happiness to the possessor, if he or she loves the bride. Now, I love you tenderly. Will you permit me to take one of these flowers ?

CLAIRe. (Bitterly.) If these flowers insure happiness, they are useless to me. Take them—take them all ! (Tears off the flowers, hands them to SUZANNE, and turns up stage.)

SUZANNE. (With emotion.) You do not seem to value these flowers, — yet it was my brother who gave you them.

BARONNE. (Leading SUZANNE toward door R., while CLAIRE comes down and throws herself into easy-chair, L.) Do not mind her, my dear ; she needs rest and calm. Do not grieve ; take your bouquet ; it will surely serve you as a model one of these days.

SUZANNE. (At door R.) Good-night, Madame.

BARONNE. (Kissing SUZANNE's forehead.) Good night, my dear. (Exit SUZANNE. The BARONNE closes the door.)

BARONNE. (Coming down centre.) What are you thinking of ! You have wounded that poor child and for no earthly reason.—What is it ? Speak ! (Approaches CLAIRE.)

CLAIRE. (*Wildly.*) Good heavens, do you not see how I suffer? Can you not understand that I am beside myself? (BARONNE *recoils centre.*) In a moment all you whom I love will have left me, and I shall remain alone in this great, strange house. Who will support me then; to whom shall I turn? The bonds which bound me to the past are severed; all that could attract me to the future is vanished.

BARONNE. (*Coming to R. of CLAIRE.*) You grieve as though you were indeed an abandoned creature. Will you not always have the old-time affections? And are you not going to add new ones to them, sincere and devoted? Your husband is here; he adores you. Have confidence.

CLAIRE. Ah! If you only knew what is passing within me! (*She rises.*) This marriage which I have sought, in spite of all, with the fury of outraged pride, now that it is accomplished, fills me with horror! (BARONNE *recoils centre.*) I would give my life to fly from this man who is my husband. (*Goes to BARONNE and flings her arms about her.*) Stay! Do not leave me,—remain here! He will not dare to come so long as you are with me!

BARONNE. Merciful heaven! You terrify me. Perhaps your mother has not yet left the house. Shall I call her back?

CLAIRE. (*Quickly.*) No! It is from her of all that I wish to hide myself. She must never suspect my fears nor guess my despair. (*Loosens her embrace.*) All that has happened has taken place in accordance with my wish;—I, alone, must bear the consequences. My weakness is inexcusable. Do not fear for me! I shall not give way again.

BARONNE. But I—

CLAIRE. (*Firmly.*) Go, rejoin your husband without apprehension. Kiss me, and let every word that has escaped my lips be forgotten by you when you cross the threshold of this chamber. Promise me that!

BARONNE. I promise. (BARONNE *embraces CLAIRE.*) I shall see you to-morrow. (*Goes to door R.*)

CLAIRE. To-morrow.

BARONNE. (*Upon the threshold.*) Poor Claire!— [Exit R. (*The sound made by the closing door causes CLAIRE to make a feint to follow the BARONNE; but she commands herself and sits upon ottoman.*)]

CLAIRE. Alas! It is all over now. All my illusions have vanished, and I see the truth at last. I no longer even belong to myself. I must henceforth live bound to a man who, at any moment, may force his way into my presence, armed with his rights, and say to me,—Obey!—To me! who have always been free and respected in every wish. (*In despair.*) Ah! would it not be better to disappear altogether? (*She rises.*) My God! (*Goes to the window and opens it.*) How calmly the lake gleams in the moon's rays! There, at least, is repose,

oblivion! (*Closing window abruptly.*) No! That would occasion an odious, a degrading scandal,—expose me to vulgar curiosity. (*Comes down centre.*) Anything rather than that! —Oh, miserable craven, he who has betrayed me! More miserable, more craven still, he who has accepted me for his wife! —Hark! (*She listens in an agony of suspense.*) Footsteps! (*She recoils toward chair before sofa r.*) It is he! (*Catches at chair to support herself.*)

[Enter PHILIPPE DERBLAY by door l. and advances as far as sofa l., where he pauses irresolute.]

PHILIPPE. (*Timidly.*) Will you permit me to approach you? For the first time we are alone, and my heart is full, almost too full for utterance. (*Advances a step between the fire-place and the ottoman.*) Until this moment I have not dared to speak, for I should have but lamely expressed my feelings. (*He advances a step.*) My entire life has been passed in labor, therefore I beseech you to be indulgent. Believe me, the utterance of my heart is more potent than that of my lips. Often enough you have seen me come to you, stammer a few words, then lapse into silence. (*Passes to centre in front of fire-place.*) I dreaded lest I might appear too bold or too timid, and the fear paralyzed me. At such times I have been content to listen to you, and your voice has been as sweet to my ear as song of bird. (*He approaches CLAIRE.*) I have lost myself in contemplating you, have been oblivious to all while my eyes followed you as you paced to and fro upon the terrace, kissed by a sunbeam,—so profoundly have you entered into my being, so abjectly do I love you. You have become my only thought, my hope, my life! Then judge of my rapture, now that I see you here, close to my heart,—mine forever more! (*He takes CLAIRE's hand.*)

CLAIRe. (*Withdrawing and coming down to l. of chair l.*) Have mercy, Monsieur!

PHILIPPE. (*Coming down to r. of chair which is before sofa, r. of fire-place.*) What is the matter? Am I so unfortunate as to have displeased you by my words?

CLAIRe. (*Gently.*) Do not repeat them now. You must see that my misery is profound. (*Sits upon chair.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Passing to l. of CLAIRE and taking her right hand.*) Yes, you are pale, trembling.—Am I the cause? (*He drops CLAIRE's hand.*)

CLAIRe. (*After a moment.—Faintly.*) Yes.

PHILIPPE (*Recoiling to chair in front of sofa, r. of fire-place.*) I beg you to be reassured. Can you not feel that my only desire is not to displease you? What must I do?—Command;—I obey with pleasure, since I love you so!

CLAIRe. (*With a sad smile.*) If you love me, then—be generous and—

PHILIPPE. (*Gently.*) Why do you hesitate? Do you wish me to leave you? Does it please you to impose this test upon me? (*Recedes as far as ottoman.*) I submit to it, if such be your will.

CLAI'RE. (*Rising and advancing to R. of ottoman, c.*) Yes,—it will be a favor to me. The many emotions through which I have passed to-day have made me ill. I need rest in order to collect myself. To-morrow, later,—I will explain all to you, when I have recovered,—am surer of myself.

PHILIPPE. (*Passing to L. of ottoman.—Affectionately.*) What can you tell me to-morrow, or later, that I cannot hear to-night? Are not our lives henceforth inseparable? Our path is all traced out for us,—you to be confiding and sincere; I, devoted and patient. I assure you I am ready to fulfil my duty. Are you like-minded?

CLAI'RE. (*Embarrassed.*) Permit me to tell you that confidence is not to be won in a moment. It is scarcely yet two hours since I became your wife. Unfortunately my life dates farther back. It has been made a term of unalloyed happiness, during which I have been free to think aloud or to be silent at my pleasure. I have never been forced to utter a falsehood. My troubles, and I have had them, as you must know, have been divined and respected. It has been understood that memory could not be instantly effaced. In a word, I have been spoiled, I have never been urged to smile when my heart was sad.—If now I must resign myself to dissimulation before you, at least grant me the time to habituate myself to the constraint.

PHILIPPE. (*Crossing to L. of CLAI'RE.—Quickly.*) I beg you, do not add another word. You do me wrong. Be assured that you will never have a tenderer or more devoted friend than I. In marrying you, I have assumed my share of your burdens, and it shall be my happiest duty to cause you to forget them. If you have been deceived in the past, have faith in the future. Far from me be the thought of imposing my love upon you! All that I ask of you is to be permitted, by dint of care and tenderness, to assist you to come off conqueror over yourself. Therein resides my sole ambition. And since you stand in need of repose, of solitude, remain by yourself, free and tranquil as you were yesterday. (*He recedes to sofa L. of fire-place.*) I will retire; it is better so, since such is your will. (*He advances to CLAI'RE and takes her right hand.*) To-morrow we will meet again! (*He kisses her brow; then overcome with emotion, he folds her in his arms.*) Ah, if you only knew how I love you!

CLAI'RE. (*Repelling him angrily.*) Leave me, Monsieur!

PHILIPPE. (*Holding her an instant before him, stupefied.*) Claire!

CLAIRE. (*Wrenching herself from him, recoiling to r. of chair and turning her back upon him.*) Ah! do not approach me!

PHILIPPE. (*Recoiling to chair before sofa r.*) You repulse me with violence, with horror! What has taken place within you? (*Becoming excited.*) This is not the mere alarm of modesty,—it is aversion, disgust! (*Advances upon CLAIRE, to r.*) Stay! I recall your words now, and I dread lest I understand them aright.—Having been the victim of a base deception, there yet remains something more than bitterness in your heart. (*CLAIRE comes down l.*) Perhaps you feel some regret!

CLAIRE. (*Faintly.*) Monsieur!—(*She turns up stage abruptly toward fire-place and pauses between the sofa l. and the ottoman.* PHILIPPE bars her passage. *She then comes down again to r. of chair l.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Authoritatively.*) Oh! listen to me. The hour for plain, frank explanation has come. Your attitude toward me fills me with suspicions which must be cleared up. A wife never repulses her husband without a motive. In order to treat me as you do, it must be that—(*Comes down to r. of CLAIRE.*)

CLAIRE. (*Turning upon him haughtily.*) Well,—what?

PHILIPPE. (*Regarding her fixedly.*) That you must still love this man who has so shamefully forsaken you! (*CLAIRE turns away and remains motionless and silent.*) You have heard,—answer me! (*Seizes her by the arm and leads her violently forward.*) I command you,—speak!

CLAIRE. (*Angrily.*) Well, and what if such were the case?

PHILIPPE. (*Raising his clenched hands as if to strike her.*) Wretch! (*His hands drop at his sides and he recoils to chair before sofa r.*) No, no,—it is impossible! You only wish to try me.—It is so, is it not?—It is some cruel jest,—tell me that it is! (*Advances a few steps suppliantly, with extended hands.*) Speak!—Say something. (*Tearfully.*) You are silent? (*He joins CLAIRE, r., sees her proud and silent, and becomes furious.*) So then it is true! (*Takes a few haphazard steps, passes his hand across his forehead, and returns to CLAIRE.*) So then, it was with a heart filled with the image of another that you have consented to become my wife! And without a single blush, you have placed your hand in mine!—Great God, to what depth of moral depravity have you fallen! (*He recoils to front of chair before sofa r.* CLAIRE comes down l.)

CLAIRE. (*In despair.*) Ah, Monsieur, have you not seen that for the last fortnight I have been beside myself? (*Turns up stage c., a little to l. of ottoman.*) Can you not understand that I have been beating about a circle from which there is no escape? I have been driven to do what I have done by an irresistible fatality. I must appear a miserable creature in your sight, and yet you can never judge me so severely as I judge myself. I merit your anger and disdain. (*Advances to*

easy-chair L.)—Stay! Take all that I have, except myself! My fortune is at your disposal; I surrender it to you. Let it be the ransom for my liberty. (*Falls upon chair.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Advancing upon her suddenly.*) Your fortune! You offer it to me,—to me! (*Coldly.*) You are mistaken, Madame! You fancy that you are still dealing with the *Duc de Bligny*!

CLAI'RE. (*Springing to her feet.*) Monsieur!—(*Lapses into silence.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Bitterly.*) Well! Defend him!—Why do you hesitate? It is the least that you can do for him. (*Furiously.*) Ah! the scales have fallen from my eyes at last! (*Advancing toward CLAI'RE.*) It was your scheme to marry a man who would be dependent upon you.—Marriage with me was a misalliance, but then my docility promised to compensate for the meanness of my birth. If by chance it should ever occur to my cramped intelligence to revolt or assert my rights, you had only to stop my mouth with a money-bag! Merciful Heaven, how blind I must have been not to have seen the snare! (*Turns up the stage to fire-place, passing between the ottoman and the sofa L.*) Dolt that I am never to have suspected the cunning intrigue,—and then to have come here, breathless and trembling, to proffer my declaration of love! Do you regard me as a madman or a clown? a cynic or a knave?—But then, I have your fortune, have I not? I have been well paid, and have no right to complain. (*Bursts into a wild laugh which ends in sobs. He throws himself upon sofa R., and conceals his face in his hands.*)

CLAI'RE. (*Stupefied.*) Monsieur!—(*She takes a step toward PHILIPPE and pauses.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Weeping.*) In one moment you have wrecked all my happiness!—and I weep, Madame, I weep. (*He rises and stands c. before fire-place. CLAI'RE passes to L. of easy-chair.*) But enough of this weakness. You have sought to purchase your liberty;—I give it you gratis. Rest assured I shall never disturb it. All bonds between us are severed. However, as a public separation would entail a scandal which I do not deserve to suffer, I beseech you to spare me that. We will live side by side, yet totally isolated. Yet, as I do not wish that the slightest misunderstanding should exist between us, listen to what I have to say. The day will come when you will realize that you have been more unjust than cruel. Then, perhaps, you will seek to retract all that you have done, but I declare to you now that it will then be too late! Were I to see you grovelling at my feet, imploring my pardon, I would have no word of pity to bestow upon you.—Farewell, Madame. There is your apartment (*Points to second door R.*); yonder is mine. (*Points to door L.*) From to-day you exist for me only in name!

(*CLAIRE bows her head and in silence crosses slowly to door R. and exits, closing the door behind her. PHILIPPE watches her anxiously until she disappears.*)

PHILIPPE. (*In anguish.*) What! Not a word, not one glance!—No repentance, no pity! (*Angrily.*) Ah! Proud, unyielding spirit, though I adore you, yet will I break you!

CURTAIN.

Bacon Bangs

M. Speeck,

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The principal Salon in the house of PHILIPPE DERBLAY, at Pont-Aresnes.* A large bay-window at back opening upon the terrace and affording a view of the Park. The furniture is of the Louis XIV. period, gilded wood with Aubusson tapestry. At first entrance L. a window with drapery; at first entrance R. a door; at second entrance R. and L. false doors; at second entrance upon both sides a pier-table with mirror. Upon each pier-table a Chinese vase bearing a large bouquet of moss roses. At first entrance L. a chair; at second entrance L. a sofa with a chair before it. At first entrance R. two easy-chairs. On either side of the bay-window, a small chair and an easy-chair.

As the curtain rises the BARON DE PRÉFONT is discovered seated in chair at first entrance L.; SUZANNE at L. of sofa, upon which CLAIRE and the BARONNE are seated; BACHELIN sits in chair near the sofa; OCTAVE stands behind BACHELIN'S chair. MOULINET stands alone c. ATHÉNAÏS sits upon chair near the draped window; to her R. stands the DUC, and just behind him DE PONTAC. PHILIPPE leans upon the first easy-chair R.

ALL. Bravo, bravo, Monsieur Moulinet!

MOULINET. (To CLAIRE) And I shall conclude, Madame, by wishing you, upon this, the anniversary of Sainte-Claire, long life and continued happiness—which is at once a reproach to celibates and a lesson to married folks!

DUC. (Aside.) A very neat insinuation!

MOULINET. Ever received by you with that grace which is your chief characteristic, your house has become to me the abode of my choice (Smiling.)—er,—that is, it is always with renewed pleasure that I bring you the tribute of my sincere admiration.

ALL. Bravo! (All rise except the BARONNE. ATHÉNAÏS comes down to R. of MOULINET, who comes down c. The DUC crosses to back of sofa upon which the BARONNE is seated.)

ATHÉNAÏS. Have you finished, papa? Charming little improvisation!

MOULINET. (Aside.) Improvisation indeed!—when I've been pegging away at it for the last two days and nights! (MOULINET crosses to L., and seats himself upon chair near the window. ATHÉNAÏS, PHILIPPE and DE PONTAC turn up stage to second entrance R., where they form a group.)

BACHELIN. (Coming down L with CLAIRE at his R.) It is in-

deed a joy to all your friends, after their anxiety at your recent illness, to find your health re-established.

CLAIRE. Thank you, my dear friend. (*She goes up stage to terrace at back.* SUZANNE brings MOULINET a cup of coffee. *The BARON joins BACHELIN, L. of foreground.*)

BARON. Ah, my dear Bachelin. I feel as if I had fallen from the clouds! Arrived only yesterday at Beaulieu, I had no idea of lunching here at Derblay's, with Bligny, Moulinet and Company. So then they are received here, are they?

BACHELIN. My dear Monsieur le Baron, social exigencies are not to be ignored. From the time of Monsieur Derblay's marriage the pleasant relations with these people have been maintained,—in appearance. Upon his return to La Varenne after the winter, Monsieur Moulinet put in an appearance here, and all I can tell you is that the doors were not closed in his face.

BARON. And so the Due and Duchesse have followed in his wake. (*OCTAVE turns up stage to small table at back, takes a cup of coffee and presents it to the BARONNE.* SUZANNE joins CLAIRE upon terrace.)

BACHELIN. As you see—

BARON. And do they come here often?

BACHELIN. Altogether too often!

BARON. Have you noticed—

BACHELIN. I!—Oh, nothing! My sight is poor; even with my spectacles I—(*ATHÉNAÏS bursts into a ringing laugh.*) But how very gay the Duchesse is! She's apt to be at the wrong time, and such things always set my nerves on edge.

BARON. From all of which I presage no good! (*Turns up stage to second entrance near DUC.* BACHELIN crosses to L.)

ATHÉNAÏS. (*To DE PONTAC,*) Yes, Monsieur, we have dancing at La Varenne every Monday.—Should the spirit move you,—

DE PONTAC. A thousand thanks, Madame; I shall improve the opportunity. And with your permission I will bring some of my fellow-officers.

ATHÉNAÏS. I shall be charmed! We have military music, you know.—Oh, by-the-by, Monsieur de Pontac, you have promised to present me to your sister, Madame de Lavardens.

DE PONTAC. At any time most agreeable to you.

ATHÉNAÏS. Any time means never.—Let us say to-morrow.

DE PONTAC. (*Bowing.*) With pleasure. (*Crosses toward MOULINET.*) Charming woman!

MOULINET. (*Graciously.*) My daughter, Monsieur.

DE PONTAC. I congratulate you.—(*Turns up stage toward CLAIRE and SUZANNE.*)

BARON. (*To MOULINET.*) You are positively radiant this morning, Monsieur Moulinet. (*PHILIPPE and ATHÉNAÏS turn up stage. CLAIRE and SUZANNE come down centre, SUZANNE to L. of CLAIRE.*)

MOULINET. (*Rising, cup in hand.*) It's wholly due to my congenial surroundings. (*Approaches BARON and BACHELIN.*)

13 X 26 1/2

Such a charming reunion ! What a metamorphosis in eight short months ! Everything is so gay and smiling, it is needless to tell me that happiness abides in this house.

BARON. At all events when you are here. *bonne heure*

MOULINET. It's a fact, Monsieur le Baron, all this luxury, these *fêtes* enchant me ! I feel that I am in my proper element. I was born for high life. My tastes protest against the injustice of my extraction. (*The DUC comes down to back of easy-chairs, R.*)

BARON. Your personal charm and amiable spirit have long since driven all that into oblivion. (*He turns up stage to back with SUZANNE. They exeunt upon terrace.*) *en route*

MOULINET. (*To BACHELIN.*) What a delightful man that Baron is ! There's a son-in-law for you worth having ! (*BACHELIN turns up stage and joins PHILIPPE and ATHÉNAÏS upon the terrace. The DUC approaches CLAIRE. MOULINET crosses and comes down R.*)

DUC. (*Aside to CLAIRE.*) Claire, why are you sad ? Surely your birthday should be a day of joy for you.

CLAIRE. I am not sad. At all events, what difference could it make to you if I were ?

DUC. Nothing that affects you can be indifferent to me ! (*CLAIRES glances at DUC for an instant, then motions to the BARONNE, who rises and accompanies her up stage to back.*)

MOULINET. (*Approaching DUC.*) Monsieur le Duc, one moment, please. I notice with chagrin that you are abusing your relations with Monsieur Derblay.

DUC. (*Indifferently.*) Pray, how so ?

MOULINET. By paying court to his wife. (*MOULINET and the DUC come down together.*)

DUC. Has your daughter done me the honor to complain ?

MOULINET. Bless your soul, no ! Your domestic economy has gone to the devil. It's a deplorable state of things, but Athénaïs doesn't seem to care a pin about your fidelity.

DUC. Well, then ?

MOULINET. I am the one who complains. Monsieur Derblay will get wind of your intrigues sooner or later ; then there'll be a quarrel between you and he will kill you as easily as I can twist the neck of a sparrow. (*Servants remove the coffee-service at back.*)

DUC. (*Laughing.*) Peace, perturbed spirit ! My attention to Madame Derblay is simple gallantry, nothing more. (*PHILIPPE, with ATHÉNAÏS upon his arm, enters at back and comes down R. CLAIRE enters at back, followed by the BARONNE, and comes down L.*) You need pass no sleepless nights on that score. At all events, you need not worry yourself about me until I request you to.

MOULINET. Eh !

DUC. You'll only wind up by compromising me. (*He goes up stage and exits by terrace.*)

MOULINET. Perhaps that is the wisest thing I could do under the circumstances! (*Follows the Duc off at back.*)

ATHÉNAÏS. (*To PHILIPPE.*) What a fashion you have of explaining things that pertain only to yourself! (*CLAIRE watches PHILIPPE and ATHÉNAÏS anxiously.*)

BARONNE. (*To CLAIRE.*) What is the matter?

CLAIRE. Nothing.

BARONNE. (*Aside.*) Ah, but there is something!

[*Enter SUZANNE at back, followed by OCTAVE.*]

SUZANNE. (*Gaily.*) Philippe!

PHILIPPE. Well, my child?

SUZANNE. The dancing on the lawn is about to begin! Will you not join us? (*SUZANNE and OCTAVE exeunt at back.*)

ATHÉNAÏS. (*To PHILIPPE.*) I claim you for the first waltz, Monsieur Derblay! (*Going to r. of CLAIRE.*) Are you not coming?

CLAIRE. (*Gloomily.*) I think Philippe will suffice.

ATHÉNAÏS. (*Smiling.*) Are you annoyed that I claim your husband? Can it be that you are a little bit jealous?

CLAIRE. (*With suppressed anger.*) I—jealous!—No, I am fatigued, that is all. (*PHILIPPE offers his arm to ATHÉNAÏS; they are about to turn up stage.*) Philippe!

PHILIPPE. (*Returning to CLAIRE.*) What is the matter? Are you ill? Do you desire anything?

CLAIRE. (*Between her clenched teeth.*) No, I am not ill, and desire nothing.—Go!

[*Exeunt PHILIPPE and ATHÉNAÏS at back. The BARONNE comes down behind easy-chair, first entrance, r. CLAIRE crosses to first entrance l., tearing a flower to pieces in her hands, and throws herself upon sofa. Music outside continues during following scene.*]

CLAIRE. (*Dejected.*) Ah!

BARONNE. What does all this mean? I find the Duc paying you gallant attention and your husband at command of Athénaïs!—Have you, then, such confidence in this Duchesse Moulinet?

CLAIRE. (*Rising and coming down to foreground, r.*) I have confidence in my husband.

BARONNE. Oh, these husbands!—they're all alike. After they have broken our hearts, they're overwhelmed with regret;—but the fact remains all the same. (*She comes down l.*)

CLAIRE. Why do you tell me this?

BARONNE. Because—(*With sudden resolution.*)—because you are not frank with me, because you are concealing some secret from me, because you suffer and I cannot bear to stand by and see you!

CLAIRE. (*With nervous gaiety.*) I? Why should I suffer? I live in the midst of luxury, bustle, and animation. My family

adore me, friends surround me, and my husband grants me my liberty. You know that such has always been my dream. Why should I suffer? (BARONNE *approaches* CLAIRE, c.)

BARONNE. Ah, but your former dream is your despair to-day. Your husband grants you your liberty, but he reserves his own, and when you see him with any other woman,—no, you are not happy!

CLAIRe. (*Abruptly.*) Well, yes, it is true; I am unhappy! And it is justice.

BARONNE. (*Stupefied.*) But your husband—

CLAIRe. Ah, do not accuse him! He is the most generous of men. I, alone, am guilty!

BARONNE. What has happened? (*They come down c. together.*)

CLAIRe. Happened!—Do you recall the night of my marriage? You were the last to leave me.—Well, after you went, my husband came, and this man who adored me,—can you believe me?—I repulsed him, drove him from me!

BARONNE. Claire!

CLAIRe. Upon being treated so harshly, his anger was terrible. I had flattered myself that I could master him,—when suddenly he became transformed in my eyes, so grand in his pride and disdain did he appear. I discovered then what sort of man he was in reality. A gleam of sense crossed me,—but too late!—for he had severed forever the bonds which united us. (*She sinks into arm-chair, r. The BARONNE passes to l. of chair.*)

BARONNE. But the following day?

CLAIRe. The following day I fell ill unto death. Oh, if I had but known then what he has been to me! (*Rapturously.*) For one whole month, night and day, he struggled with Death for possession of me! And that I am alive to-day, I owe to him. (*She rises and comes down c. with BARONNE.*) I know not what has taken place within me, for I find myself no longer the same person. I have returned to life with different sentiments, different thoughts. Can it be gratitude for his care, or admiration for his character? Whatever it may be, I am irresistibly attracted to him. When he is not here, involuntarily I seek him; yet when he is by my side, I do not look at him, scarcely see him. He is so severe, so sad, that I dare not address him. Oh, if he would only say one word to me, only give me his hand! I would be so thankful that I would throw myself into his arms. (*Throws herself into BARONNE's arms and rests her head upon her shoulder.*)

BARONNE. You love him?

CLAIRe. Yes. (*She raises herself.*)

BARONNE. It is a fatal sign. A wife really loves her husband only when he has made himself her master. The more energetic and high-spirited Philippe has shown himself, the more surely have you been vanquished.

CLAIRe. Yes! And I must submit to all the consequences

of my defeat:—bear the presence of this woman, Athénaïs, who boldly flings herself at my husband, and have neither the power to tear him from her, nor the right to defend myself. (*Passes to L.*) But let her beware! If she goes too far—I shall be capable of committing some mad deed which will prove the ruin of one or the other of us!

BARONNE. (*Going to CLAIRE.*) No, no; let there be no madness; rather wisdom and tact. You have committed a fault; you must repair it.

CLAIRe. But how?

BARONNE. Has the idea never occurred to you of going to your husband and trying to renew the broken bonds?

CLAIRe. ~~I have not even dared to think of such a thing—Just think,—we live here side by side, and yet are more isolated than two strangers.—What!—go to him after having repulsed him?~~

BARONNE. Nevertheless, it is the only course to be pursued. A man of your husband's stamp loves but once, and then for all eternity. But he is self-willed, and you will only succeed in disarming him by humiliating yourself before him.

CLAIRe. (*Glowingly.*) Oh, I am ready to do that!—But what if he should suspect some new caprice?

[*The BARON appears on the terrace at back; picking up pebbles.*]

BARONNE. ~~From a distance~~ Of course you must await a favorable opportunity. If it does not present itself, we will invent one. (*Turns up stage to first entrance, near easy-chair.*) And to begin with, I am going to ingratiate myself between our dear Duchesse Moulinet and your husband. (*CLAIRe turns up stage behind sofa.*) Stay! Behold the Baron—picking up pebbles like little Tom Thumb! There's a well-trained husband for you! (*BARON comes down c.*) Baron, your arm!

BARON. I'm entirely at your service, my dear.—Do you know I have made a most curious discovery:—I fancy the earth about Pont-Avesnes contains alum. It really is my duty to speak to Monsieur Derblay.

BARONNE. (*Affectionately.*) Yes, yes, Baron; you're an angel! And what is more, you're a scientific angel.

BARON. Oh, now that's going too far!

BARONNE. Kiss my hand.

BARON. (*Tranquill, kisses her hand and offers his arm.*) With pleasure!

BARONNE. See you again directly, Claire.

[*Exeunt BARON and BARONNE at back. Upon reaching the terrace, they encounter the DUC, pause an instant to converse with him, then disappear L.*]

CLAIRe. (*Alone.*) Yes, I will humiliate myself! It will prove a sweet and welcome duty.—But he!—Will he consent to par-

don me? (DUC comes down L. behind sofa.) When one has loved as he has loved, can one forget?

DUC. (Gently.) When one has loved profoundly, one never forgets.

CLAIRE. (Coming down c.) Whom do you seek here?

DUC. You. (CLAIRE turns up stage toward terrace; the DUC arrests her.) I beseech you, remain. For the past two weeks you have seemed determined to shun me.

CLAIRE. (Disdainfully.) I?—(She comes down c. with the DUC just behind her to L.)

DUC. This is the first time that I have found myself at liberty to speak to you.

CLAIRE. We have nothing to say to each other.

DUC. (Coming to R. of easy-chair.) Why will you play the hypocrite with me? (Very gently.) Do you hope to conceal your chagrin from me?

CLAIRE. (Coldly.) I have no chagrin.

DUC. I should be happy to believe you. Look! At this very moment there are tears in your eyes. (Observing her.) Pardon me, but since this morning I have noticed that you have been nervous, restless, that you have had the utmost difficulty to command your feelings—which is even now the case. (CLAIRE comes down R., between the two easy chairs.) For some reason or other you have not ceased to watch your husband.

CLAIRE. Well?

DUC. Well,—Monsieur Derblay has had eyes for the Duchesse only,—and you have appeared to suffer. Whence I conclude that the harmony, which you pretend exists between you and him, is not genuine (Approaches R. of easy-chair), and that he fails to appreciate at its true value the treasure which chance, or rather my bad luck, has given him. Besides, a thousand little things, of no account in themselves, have occurred to me, and I have arrived at the conclusion that you do not enjoy, as you insist you do, all the happiness that you deserve.

CLAIRE. (Firmly.) If such were the case, you would be the only person who would have no right to avow it to yourself and to say it to me! (She turns up stage to be arrested by the DUC, and returning to easy-chair, seats herself.)

DUC. (Passionately.) Claire!—Do you believe that a man can always be master of his reason and will? Every sense counsels me to remain apart from you. I ought to do so for the sake of your repose. So I had resolved, and had done all in my power to forget you. But I have been drawn back here in spite of myself. They told me that you were happy, and I rejoiced. (He approaches CLAIRE's chair.) I had hoped that I should see you again without danger to myself. Had you been happy, I might have adored you from afar, without a word, without a glance that would have disturbed your happiness.

But you suffer!—therefore I am no longer master of myself (*Passes between the two chairs and comes down c.*), and I realize that in all the world you are the only woman for me!

CLAIRE. (*Rising.*) Indeed?—I admire your impudence! (*Approaching the Duc who has turned up stage to L. of easy chair.*) Having once been able to choose between a woman, whom you said you loved, and a fortune which you coveted, you have not hesitated: you closed your heart and opened your pocket! And having the money to-day, perhaps you would like the woman also. You are too ambitious, Duc! Altogether too ambitious. (*Passes before the Duc and comes down L. Duc passes to c.*)

DUC. You perfectly well understand that I have been more sinned against than sinning. It is true, I have had to choose between my honor and my love, have had to sacrifice one to the other. But I have suffered enough, and you have no right to reproach me. (*He comes down c., a little to r. CLAIRE passes to c.*)

CLAIRE. Reproach you? You flatter yourself! Were I to experience any feeling whatever in regard to you, it would be a feeling of gratitude; for, if I am the wife of Monsieur Derblay, who is as clever as you are incompetent, as devoted as you are egotistical, who possesses all of the good qualities which you lack, and none of the defects which you have, do I not owe it to you?

DUC. (*With suppressed fury.*) Monsieur Derblay is, no doubt, perfect, but he possesses one blemish which mars his perfection—at least, for you—he does not love you!

CLAIRE. (*Recoiling slightly to L.*) Duc!

DUC. His place is by your side to-day, attentive and affectionate.—Where is he?—Flirting with the Duchesse!

CLAIRE. What you say is infamous!

DUC. It is none the less true! (*Turning up stage to L. of easy chair.*) He disdains you!

CLAIRE. (*Turning up stage in front of sofa.*) Ah, enough of this! I will not listen to you another moment. You build your castle upon the isolation of my hopes, which will never be realized, I promise you.—I may be a woman to be pitied, but never to be consoled!

DUC. (*Approaching her.*) Claire!

CLAIRE. Leave me! (*She recoils menacingly.*) One word more, and I summon help!

DUC. (*Bowing.*) I obey you, and retire.—But you will change your tactics. (*Sardonically.*) I am patient,—and will wait.

[*Exit at back.*]

CLAIRE. (*In despair.*) Merciful Heaven, have I fallen so low that I am open to insult? (*Crosses and goes to easy chair, r.*) This, then, is the result of my madness—lost happiness! menaced honor! (*Pauses overwhelmed.*)

[Enter the MARQUISE at back and comes down, R.]

MARQUISE. Good morning, my darling.

CLAIRE. (Going to her joyfully.) Ah, mother!

MARQUISE. Are you all alone?

CLAIRE. (Embarrassed.) The Baronne has just left me. Philippe is in the park with our guests. (They come down c., CLAIRE at R. of MARQUISE.) Why did you not come earlier? You have not been ill?

MARQUISE. No, I returned later than I thought from a visit to my little orphans. (Smiling.) You know I must busy myself about some one now that I have you no longer with me. Instead of one daughter, I have sixty babies to feed, clothe, and teach.—Oh, but I am assisted in my labours! Do you know what Philippe has done? Sent me ten thousand francs, yesterday, in your name and in honor of your birthday!—Ah, what a husband you have! You cannot love him enough, for he is the best of men!

CLAIRE. (Gloomily.) Yes, mother.

MARQUISE. (Turning and perceiving PHILIPPE at back.) Ah, here he is! (PHILIPPE comes down c. MARQUISE hastens to meet him. CLAIRE comes down before easy chair, R.)

PHILIPPE. Marquise! I have just been informed of your arrival! (Kisses her hand.)

MARQUISE. In the name of my little orphans I thank you a thousand times, my dear boy!

PHILIPPE. You must thank your daughter, Marquise. I am but the hand which executes (MARQUISE comes down L.), she, the heart that commands. (CLAIRE sits upon easy-chair, R. MARQUISE beckons mysteriously to PHILIPPE; he approaches her.)

MARQUISE. (Aside to PHILIPPE.) Now, here is the article which you requested me to order from Paris.—Nay,—give it her yourself! (Hands him a jewel-box.)

PHILIPPE. (Crossing, and pausing a little to L. of CLAIRE'S chair.) Claire, accept my souvenir of this day.—(CLAIRE rises with a joyous bound and takes the jewel-case from PHILIPPE.) Having been chosen by your mother, I trust it will please you. (At these words CLAIRE bows her head sadly, without opening the case.)

MARQUISE. Well, will you not look at it? 'Tis a princely gift, my darling. (CLAIRE passes to c. and opens the case.) Come, Philippe, adjust this token of slavery yourself.—(PHILIPPE comes down to R. of CLAIRE, takes the necklace and fastens it about CLAIRE'S neck. The MARQUISE takes the case, places it upon the pier-table and returns.) Now, then, embrace your husband.—Do I embarrass you?—Stay! I'm not looking.—(MARQUISE turns away gaily; CLAIRE, trembling, bows her head and PHILIPPE kisses her brow.)—There! (To PHILIPPE.) Well, what is the news at Pont-Avesnes? (Turns up stage with PHILIPPE to meet SUZANNE and OCTAVE who enter at back.)

CLAIRE. (*Coming down L., sadly.*) Sad kiss, which the lips bestow, but which comes not from the heart ! (*The MARQUISE kisses SUZANNE and goes out upon the terrace with PHILIPPE. SUZANNE and OCTAVE come down to second entrance L.; SUZANNE behind the sofa, OCTAVE before it.*)

SUZANNE. (*To OCTAVE.*) Courage, now ! We must tell her all. (*SUZANNE comes down to L. of CLAIRE; OCTAVE to her R.*)

OCTAVE. (*To CLAIRE.*) Claire, I have great news for you :-- Suzanne and I have declared our love !

CLAIRE. (*Joyfully.*) Oh, my dear children !

SUZANNE. We wished to tell you first, and place our happiness in your hands.

OCTAVE. Speak to Philippe for me ; ask him to give me Suzanne.

CLAIRE. (*Nervously.*) I !

OCTAVE. You are willing to undertake my cause, are you not ?

CLAIRE. (*With sudden determination.*) Yes, and I am going to plead it this moment, as though it were my own.

OCTAVE. A thousand thanks !

CLAIRE. Ask Philippe to come to me. (*SUZANNE and OCTAVE turn up stage to terrace and join PHILIPPE and the MARQUISE. CLAIRE passes to foreground R.*) I am saved ! At last the longed-for occasion presents itself ! His tenderness for his sister may lead him back to me ! (*OCTAVE, the MARQUISE and SUZANNE disappear R. PHILIPPE comes down c., a little to L., before the sofa.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Gravely and coldly.*) You have some favor to ask ? I am all attention.

CLAIRE. (*Turning up stage to L. of easy-chair.*) We live so isolated one from the other, that when I have a favor to ask of you I have to run the risk of detaining you.

PHILIPPE. What do you seek ?

CLAIRE. First of all, tell me, do you feel any interest in Octave ?

PHILIPPE. I do not think your brother has any cause to doubt it.

CLAIRE. Were you to have an opportunity of proving this interest--

PHILIPPE. I should undoubtedly seize it.

CLAIRE. Well, the opportunity is at hand, and I must warn you that it is of serious import.

PHILIPPE. How you evade the point ! One would say you had no faith in obtaining your wish.

CLAIRE. Judge for yourself. Octave loves your sister and has commissioned me to demand her hand in marriage.

PHILIPPE. (*Repressing a start of surprise.*) Ah ! (*He pauses, absorbed.*)

CLAIRE. (*Anxiously.*) You do not answer ?

PHILIPPE. I am grieved for your brother, but this marriage is out of the question.

CLAIRE. (*Sadly.*) You refuse?

PHILIPPE. (*Very gravely.*) I refuse!

CLAIRE. Why?

PHILIPPE. Because this new bond would attach me yet more intimately to your family, and after what has already taken place between us, I do not consider it expedient.

CLAIRE. (*Quickly.*) Take care lest you wreck Suzanne's happiness! She loves Octave.

PHILIPPE. She is but sixteen years old. She is at that happy age when the feelings may change without leaving deep and sorrowful traces upon the heart. She will forget. (*Comes down L.*)

CLAIRE. What if you should be mistaken? What if she should not forget, and suffer?

PHILIPPE. (*Turning up stage c.—Firmly.*) In that case I should have to say but one word to her in order to turn her from you and yours forever.

CLAIRE. (*With anguish.*) Then it is revenge you seek?

PHILIPPE. (*Haughtily.*) Revenge! Is it like me?

CLAIRE. (*Suppliantly.*) Oh, Philippe, be generous! I am sufficiently crushed! What must I do to turn you? I have committed grievous wrongs toward you, I know—

PHILIPPE. (*Laughing bitterly.*) Indeed? You have committed grievous wrongs toward me! And you deign to admit the fact! Upon my word, these are great concessions that you make.

CLAIRE. I have done you wrong, but you make my expiation hard indeed.

PHILIPPE. I? How so? Have I ever addressed you a single reproach? Have I ever uttered an offensive word? Have I ever been lacking in attention?

CLAIRE. (*Sadly.*) No! But how infinitely would I prefer your anger to this haughty indifference with which you treat me! The world about me boasts of my happiness; wherever I go I am envied, feted. But when I return to my home, where is my happiness? I search for it, and find only solitude and desertion.

PHILIPPE. It is not dependent upon me that it should be otherwise. You, yourself, have decided your course of life. It is exactly in accordance with your wishes.

CLAIRE. It is true. But, at least, I had the right to count upon peace of mind, and that I have not obtained.—It was you who permitted the Due and Duchesse de Bligny to return to your house.

PHILIPPE. They are your relatives. Would it have been becoming in me to close my doors upon them? I have submitted to their coming here. Of what have you to complain?

CLAIRE. (*With increasing violence.*) Oh, do not affect to misunderstand me! You know that the Duchesse only comes here because she hates me.—Her scheme is as plain as day. She parades you about and compromises you—(*PHILIPPE starts.*) in spite of yourself. But her inflictions, which accentuate your indifference to me and wound me, have been remarked.—Beware! I give you fair warning that I will not bear them much longer! (*She passes before PHILIPPE and comes down L.*) PHILIPPE *takes a step toward her, but pauses at first entrance L.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Bitterly.*) How little you have changed! Always violent and proud! You made a fine show of yourself in the eyes of the world when, like a mad creature, you plunged headlong into the chance of marriage. And now, to-day, at the mere suggestion of being criticised, you lose your wits and forget that you menace me. (*He comes down R. CLAIRE turns up stage to first entrance, c.*)

CLAIRE. (*Desperately.*) No! I do not menace; I supplicate. Have pity upon me, Philippe; do not hold me responsible for the misery of these two children! They are out yonder, smiling, full of affection and hope,—and for my error they must weep! Ah, do not expect me to cause them such pain! I have not the courage.—(*OCTAVE appears upon terrace at back.*) Octave! come here!—(*OCTAVE comes down to R. of CLAIRE.*) Now, Monsieur, inform him yourself! (*Falls upon sofa.* PHILIPPE *turns up stage to front of easy-chair, R.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Angrily.*) Madame!—

OCTAVE. (*Observing them.*) Why, what has happened? How excited and distressed you seem! You have spoken to Philippe? Has he—*(Interrogates them with an anxious glance.)*

PHILIPPE. (*Gravely.*) Octave, you must renounce your project.

OCTAVE. (*Stupefied.*) Renounce it!—Why?

PHILIPPE. I beg you not to ask me.

OCTAVE. What! No explanation?—Can it be you, Philippe, whom I love so sincerely, who cause me such chagrin? (*PHILIPPE sits in easy-chair.*) Speak to me, Claire! Tell me his motive for—Have I displeased him unwittingly?—Why has he changed so since you became his wife?

CLAIRE. (*In anguish.*) Octave!—

OCTAVE. (*With sudden idea.*) Ah,—the money! Is it then because I have no fortune? (*To PHILIPPE, who rises.*) You have shown me how to become wealthy; I mean to follow your example; I shall work for a living.

CLAIRE. (*Rising and coming to OCTAVE in wonder.*) What do you say? You have no fortune,—you!

OCTAVE. (*Seeing his imprudence.*) Claire!

CLAIRE. (*With increasing agitation.*) What do you mean?

PHILIPPE. (*Abruptly.*) Octave, I forbid you to—

CLAI'RE. (*Passing between OCTAVE and PHILIPPE.*) Excuse me, Monsieur,—I insist upon his speaking!

OCTAVE. Pardon me. I have betrayed a secret which I had sworn to keep. You were in ignorance of the loss of our suit, and ought always so to have remained.

CLAI'RE. I recall now that they told me that, should our cause fail, it would involve us in financial ruin. Were you to lose your fortune, I must lose my dowry!—But when I was married—

OCTAVE. The disaster had already occurred.

CLAI'RE. (*Dazedly.*) And—my husband—Philippe?

OCTAVE. Was aware of the fact. (*Recedes, L.*)

CLAI'RE. (*In despair.*) He knew it! And I—I—Oh, what a wretch I have been!

OCTAVE. Claire!

CLAI'RE. (*Casting herself, sobbing, into OCTAVE's arms.*) Yes! It was on my account that he has refused you his sister!—On my account, fatal being that I am, who have wrought the misery of all who approach me! (*Bursts into sobs.*)

OCTAVE. Claire, I know not what has happened, but since you accuse yourself, all may yet be righted.—Philippe is good; he will pardon you.

CLAI'RE. (*Wildly.*) No! He has said he never will! And I understand him now! (*Turns up stage L, behind sofa.* OCTAVE comes down c.)

OCTAVE. (*Suppliantly.*) Philippe!

PHILIPPE. (*Gravely.*) Octave, it was not I who provoked this explanation. It has produced itself through the mediation of Fate; and I can only wish it had not occurred, especially in my presence. In any event, however, it cannot modify my resolution. Your sister well knew in advance that she had nothing to expect at my hands, and that I had nothing to grant. (*A burst of laughter is heard upon the terrace.*)

OCTAVE. (*Placing himself before CLAI'RE in order that she may recover herself.*) Claire, they are coming! (*Turns up stage to back.* CLAI'RE hastily wipes her eyes.)

[ATHÉNAÏS, MOULINET, the BARON and BARONNE, appear upon terrace at back.]

ATHÉNAÏS. (*Coming down c.*) They are going to have a set of square dances! Monsieur Derblay, I have been looking for you high and low.

CLAI'RE. (*Furiously.*) Ah! that creature again!

ATHÉNAÏS. (*To PHILIPPE*) Will you open the *bal chumpêtre* with me? That will be charming! Come. (*PHILIPPE offers ATHÉNAÏS his arm; as she is about to take it, CLAI'RE crosses to c., in front of ATHÉNAÏS.*)

CLAI'RE. (*To ATHÉNAÏS*) Pardon me if I disturb your plans, but I wish to speak with you a moment!

ATHÉNAÏS. (*Laughingly.*) So?—at once?

CLAI'RE. (*Firmly.*) At once.

ATHÉNAÏS. (*To PHILIPPE.*) I must beg you to excuse me, then. I will join you presently.

[*PHILIPPE turns up stage after regarding the two women a moment uneasily. CLAI'RE follows him with her eyes and turns up stage to second entrance, c. Exeunt the BARON, BARONNE and MOULINET with PHILIPPE, R. of terrace. ATHÉNAÏS seats herself in easy-chair R.*]

ATHÉNAÏS. Now what is it, my dear?

CLAI'RE. (*Coming down to L. of ATHÉNAÏS' chair.*) Scarcely half an hour ago, when you led my husband away, you asked me if I were displeased, if I were not a little jealous.

ATHÉNAÏS. I was joking.

CLAI'RE. Then you did wrong, for you spoke truly.

ATHÉNAÏS. You,—jealous!

CLAI'RE. Yes.

ATHÉNAÏS. Of me?

CLAI'RE. Of you. You see that I am frank. It seems to me that my husband is paying you unnecessary attention, and I address you in the hope that you will put an end to a procedure which is most painful to me.

ATHÉNAÏS. (*Sweetly.*) Why, my poor dear, have you been suffering all this while and have never spoken of it? (*Rising and coming down L.*) But do you not exaggerate a little? Truly I recall nothing that could cause you the slightest annoyance. Monsieur Derblay makes himself very agreeable to me, but this sympathy, especially among relatives, is not surprising, and certainly in no respect criminal.

CLAI'RE. (*Coming down, c.*) It pains me, all the same.

ATHÉNAÏS. My dear child, you must seek a remedy for your ill from your husband.—I can do nothing.

CLAI'RE. Yes, you can cut short this intimacy.

ATHÉNAÏS. Pray, how? By being rude to your husband? In the first place, that would be imposing a very disagreeable charge upon me; and, after all, do you believe the means would prove efficacious?

CLAI'RE. It is not exactly that which I meant to propose.

ATHÉNAÏS. What, then?

CLAI'RE. Remain away from this house for some time.

ATHÉNAÏS. (*Abruptly.*) Is that your scheme?

CLAI'RE. Yes. And I pray you to comply with my request. You may call me mad, if you will, but comply. My happiness is at stake.

ATHÉNAÏS. And under what pretext do you propose that I estrange myself? What would be said of a separation so brusque that it resembles a rupture?

CLAIRE. We will undertake to explain it in a satisfactory manner.

ATHÉNAÏS. We should never succeed (*CLAIRE comes down R.*), and that would be disastrous for me. (*Comes down. c.*) You have been frank; I will follow suit. I am new to the world to which the Duc de Bligny has presented me; it suits me, and I propose to maintain the hold which I have been clever enough to secure upon it. But this same world is something of a rigorist. So you can understand that, were my husband's family to turn the cold shoulder upon me, an opportunity to pull me to pieces would at once offer itself. I am regarded with such jealous eyes!—Then, farewell to all my dreams!—If you have your love, I have my ambition. I appreciate your wish to protect the one; therefore suffer me to defend the other.

CLAIRE. (*Approaching ATHÉNAÏS.*) So you refuse?

ATHÉNAÏS. Very reluctantly.—But conscientiously, now,—put yourself in my place.

CLAIRE. (*Violently.*) Why should I put myself in your place, when it is you who have put yourself in mine and propose to retain it! Ever since I have known you, you have pursued me with your envy and hatred! You have robbed me of my *fiancé*, and now you try to defraud me of my husband! I have been unable to defend the one, but I shall wrest the other from you.

ATHÉNAÏS. (*Furiously.*) Ah! that's it, is it?—Yes, ever since my childhood I have repaid in hate all that you and your set have squandered in scorn upon me. For ten long years your title and fortune have held me down. But look at me to-day! I have millions at my command, I am a duchesse, and you are at my feet suing for quarter.

CLAIRE. Have a care! I am not of a blood that long brooks insult with impunity!

ATHÉNAÏS. (*Coming down, L.*) And I bear a name which places me above your anger.

CLAIRE. I will call your conduct toward me in question—

ATHÉNAÏS. Before whom?

CLAIRE. The world.

ATHÉNAÏS. Which one?—Yours, to which I have ascended? Or mine, into which you have sunk?

CLAIRE. (*Turning up to first entrance, c.*) Before that one, whichever it may be, where dwell honorable people in whose eyes respect for others is a duty,—respect for themselves a right! (*ATHÉNAÏS turns up stage to first entrance, L., before sofa.*) Before that world I will repeat what I have just said to you. (*Approaching ATHÉNAÏS.*) I will show you up as you are, and we shall see whether the name you bear, grand as it is, will suffice to conceal your meanness and duplicity!

— ATHÉNAÏS. Then it is a scandal you are after?

[*The DUC, OCTAVE, the BARONNE, BACHELIN, MOULINET, DE PONTAC, and PHILIPPE appear upon the terrace.*]

CLAIRe. It is an execution that I intend.—For the last time, will you consent to my demand?

— ATHÉNAÏS. (*Furiously.*) No! A thousand times no!

CLAIRe. Then, we will see about it! (*Turns up stage to second entrance, a little to r. ATHÉNAÏS crosses, r., pausing before easy-chair.*)

CLAIRe. (*Excitedly.*) Due, take your wife away, unless you wish to see her driven from this house! (*DUC comes down l., before sofa. MOULINET comes down r., to r. of ATHÉNAÏS. The BARONNE and OCTAVE come down l., passing to l. of sofa, OCTAVE l. of BARONNE. BACHELIN and DE PONTAC come down to second entrance, r.; PHILIPPE remains at back, c.*)

MOULINET. (*Willy.*) What! Turn my daughter out of doors? The Duchesse, my daughter!

— ATHÉNAÏS. (*To DUC.*) Monsieur, will you permit me to be insulted in this fashion without defending me?

[*DUC crosses to l. of ATHÉNAÏS. CLAIRe comes down l., before sofa. PHILIPPE comes down c., a little to l.*]

DUC. (*Coldly, to PHILIPPE.*) You have heard, Monsieur, what Madame Derblay has said? Do you assume the responsibility of it, or are you prepared to offer an apology?

PHILIPPE. (*Advancing gravely, anxiously watched by CLAIRe.*) Monsieur le Due, whatever Madame Derblay sees fit to do, I abide by.

DUC. (*Bowing with a smile.*) Very well. (*Offers his arm to ATHÉNAÏS, who takes it; they turn up stage, followed by MOULINET, and disappear l. of terrace.*)

CLAIRe. (*Advancing to PHILIPPE, with effusion.*) Oh, thanks, Philippe!

PHILIPPE. (*Arresting her by a gesture.*) You owe me no thanks. In defending you, it is my honor that I defend!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

FIRST TABLEAU.

SCENE.—*The study of PHILIPPE DERBLAY at Pont-Aresnes.*
Door at back; doors, R. and L. A large window, R.; wide fire-place, L. A library-table, c. In front of the fire-place a small table. At first entrance, R., a cabinet. To L. of library-table an arm-chair; to R. a chair. At back, each side of door, a chair; at first entrance, L., near the small table, a chair. At first entrance, R., near the cabinet, an easy-chair. Upon the library-table are an ink-stand with pens and pencil, sealing-war and seal; also a small candlestick in gilt bronze with candle burning. As the curtain rises, PHILIPPE is discovered, seated upon arm-chair, L. of table, in the act of sealing a letter; he writes the address and extinguishes the candle. SUZANNE enters by door L., comes to PHILIPPE, kisses him and passes behind the table. PHILIPPE places the letter in the blotting-case.

SUZANNE. Good morning, brother!

PHILIPPE. Already up, Suzanne!

SUZANNE. Already!—Why, it is eight o'clock! (Goes to the window, opens it, throws open the blinds, and then closes the window. Light fills the scene. SUZANNE returns to table, behind chair, R.) You bad boy, you have sat up the whole night working!

PHILIPPE. I had some very important accounts to arrange.

SUZANNE. Well, another time, please select the day for such nonsense, not the night. (Extinguishes the lamp that burns upon table.)

PHILIPPE. I could not help myself this time. (Rises.) Where are you going this morning?

SUZANNE. I'm going to take a turn round the neighborhood; this is my day for visiting my pensioners. (Comes down to first entrance R., near table. PHILIPPE passes to L. of her.)

PHILIPPE. Here,—add my mite to yours. (Gives her a bank-note.)

SUZANNE. (Kissing his cheek.) I thank you in their name. (Kissing the other cheek.) And for myself! (Turns up stage to back.)

PHILIPPE. Listen to me. Before you go—I have something to say to you. (SUZANNE comes down to R. of PHILIPPE.) Claire was speaking yesterday of certain projects—and hopes, that you entertain.

SUZANNE. (*Confused.*) Philippe—

PHILIPPE. (*Tenderly.*) Why did you not come to me first and tell me about it? Are you afraid of me now-a-days?

SUZANNE. No, but such a confession seemed more easily made to a sister than to a brother.

PHILIPPE. (*Aside.*) To a sister! (*loud*) You love Claire?

SUZANNE. Oh, tenderly.

PHILIPPE. And Octave,—how long have you loved him?

SUZANNE. Philippe, I believe I have loved him ever since the day I first saw him. He has since completely captivated me by saying so many nice things of you! It has all gone straight to my heart. And then, he seems to be as happy in my company as I am when by his side.

PHILIPPE. (*With emotion.*) Very well, my child. You see that my only aim has been to render you happy. If such be your choice, you shall marry the man you love.

SUZANNE. Oh, Philippe, how shall I thank you!

PHILIPPE. Very easily, my darling.—As you go out this morning, you will pass the church.—Pause there a moment and say one little prayer for me. I shall be repaid.

SUZANNE. With all my heart! Adieu. (*Turns toward door, R.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Advancing a step.*) Suzanne! (*She returns to PHILIPPE and throws herself into his arms. They embrace. Then PHILIPPE accompanies her to door, R. Exit SUZANNE.*)

PHILIPPE. (*Following her with his eyes.*) Adieu, sweet child, —joy of my life! (*Passing his hand across his eyes.*) Come, come! (*Crosses to table and seats himself upon chair, L.*)

[Enter a servant at back.]

SERVANT. (*Coming down to back of table.*) Monsieur Bachelin begs to know if Monsieur will receive him?

PHILIPPE. Certainly, let him enter. (*Servant takes the lamp, turns up stage to back, steps to L., to permit BACHELIN to enter: then exits, closing the door behind him. BACHELIN comes down behind table, shakes hands with PHILIPPE, places his hat on the end of the table, and seats himself in chair, R. of table.*)

BACHELIN. Well, what news since yesterday?

PHILIPPE. The final arrangements for the encounter were made during the evening.

BACHELIN. And the duel takes place?

PHILIPPE. This morning at ten o'clock, at the cross-roads near the Pool; the weapons, pistols.

BACHELIN. It is serious—but the chances are in your favor! You see, my dear boy, you may consider me an old fogey, but I am one of those who believe that it is not chance but Providence who rules above. We shall meet again to-morrow, Philippe.

PHILIPPE. I hope so. Yet it is necessary to be prepared for the worst. Have you examined the papers I sent you?

BACHELIN. Yes. Everything is correct.

PHILIPPE. I thank you. Take this letter; it contains my will. I have divided all that I possess between my sister and my wife. It is my wish that she, who bears my name, should be independent. Now (*both rise and come down centre, before table*), in the name of your old friendship, I charge you with a mission for Claire, which will be painful, I know, but which you alone can fulfil. You, in whose sight I have grown to man's estate, to whom I confessed all yesterday, and who know all that I have suffered, you will seek my wife, will tell her how dearly I have loved her, and how it has been my constant wish to see her happy. Paint me as you know me—not as she has wished to know me,—hopeful, tender. In a word, do not permit her to bear me in ungracious memory.

BACHELIN. Ah, my friend, why do you not seek her yourself, this very moment?

PHILIPPE. (*Firmly*.) You forget that, were I to take such a step, it would resemble servility. Ah, do not accredit me with being hard-hearted. It is not so, I assure you. But when in her presence I am no longer able to maintain my pride of bearing, in that moment I am guilty of weakness. (*Comes down L.*)

BACHELIN. But she is vanquished, crushed completely.

PHILIPPE. You are mistaken. She still struggles with herself. Stay, this very night I have had proof of it. I was here, sitting at this table. (*Turns up stage to chair, L. of table.*) While I watched, and amidst the dead silence of the sleeping house, I heard above my head incessant footsteps pacing to and fro—the footsteps of my unhappy wife. (*BACHELIN comes down, R.*) In thought I saw her pacing that chamber which we should have shared in common. What shall I say! For an instant I was overcome by weakness, was seized with a violent desire to seek this woman whom I adore, but who does not belong to me. I persuaded myself that I was mad to risk the accident of death without having once taken her in these arms. No longer master of myself, my entire being yearned toward her, and I was upon the point of forgetting myself, when I heard her open her door, cross the saloon, and descend the stairs. Her steps drew near; I listened tremblingly. (*Turns up stage to back, passes behind the table and pauses near door, R.*) She paused there; the door only separated us. (*BACHELIN turns up stage to R. of easy chair, first entrance R., and passes behind it.*) I was about to spring forward, fling it open, and cry, Come, you know how I adore you! (*Comes to chair, R. of table.*) But with despair I heard the sound of her footsteps fade away, mount the stairs—then all was silent. (*Drops upon chair.*) Thus she resisted my influence, even at the eleventh hour!—And I had been upon the verge of yielding! Oh, it was all over then. And I made this last, supreme resolution:

If I fall, I will leave her a grand, proud memory of me ; if I survive, I will compel her to share in the conquest of happiness !

BACHELIN. (*Crossing to PHILIPPE. Gravely.*) My friend, the violence which has occasioned such grave complications is the last revolt of this fatal pride that is already upon the wane. Oh, you must indeed return safe and sound from this encounter, for I am persuaded that your death would entail another's. (*PHILIPPE attempts to make a gesture of protestation ; BACHELIN prevents him.*) Nay, I am sure of it !

PHILIPPE. Rest assured, I shall defend myself. (*He rises and comes down with BACHELIN. A bell is heard ringing.*)

BACHELIN. I will retire. (*Much moved.*) So, then, be cool, my brave lad ! (*Embraces PHILIPPE.*) Au revoir ! (*BACHELIN turns up stage to chair R. of table, takes his hat and goes to door at back, which he opens. Enter the BARON and OCTAVE. BACHELIN salutes them and exits, closing the door behind him.*) PHILIPPE passes to foreground R. The BARON places his hat upon chair which is to L. of door at back ; OCTAVE places his upon chair, R. of door. PHILIPPE turns up stage to first entrance, R.)

PHILIPPE. You are in advance of time, are you not ? (*BARON comes down, L. of table, and passes to L. of PHILIPPE. OCTAVE comes down to R. of easy-chair, first entrance, R.)*

BARON. It is only nine o'clock, but we have been here some moments. We quitted Beaulieu on foot, as if for a walk, in order to avoid comment. The Baronne joins us here, and will keep Madame Derblay company.

PHILIPPE. Thank you, my dear Baron. You have ever testified a warm friendship for me, and I am not ungrateful. As for you, Octave, I have a debt to pay you, which I do with all my heart. I have held you responsible for wrongs which were not of your committing. I have been unjust, and accuse myself.

BARON. Bravo, my friend ! (*Shakes hands with PHILIPPE.*)

OCTAVE. (*Much moved.*) Philippe, I have learned of all that has passed between you and Claire. I now know how culpable my sister has been, and I pity you for having had to endure such misery as much as I admire your unselfishness in being able to conceal it. You were entirely in the right. We have nothing to expect from you, and I ask your pardon for having dared to demand your sister's hand in marriage.

PHILIPPE. No, my friend. (*With a glance at BARON.*) And I wish it to be distinctly understood that, under the existing serious circumstances, I am more than happy to know that she is loved by so honorable a man as you. I would repair my momentary injustice, and therefore bequeath Suzanne to you, the most precious legacy in my power.

OCTAVE. Philippe ! (*Grasps his hand and falls weeping upon PHILIPPE's shoulder.*) Oh, Philippe ! —

BARON. Brave heart !

PHILIPPE. (*Mastering his emotion.*) Come, come, Marquis, be firm. I trust that you may yet receive my sister from my own hands. But should I not be here to perform that happy duty, when you marry her, love her fondly ; she deserves it. 'Tis a tender heart, which the slightest deception would crush.

OCTAVE (*Earnestly.*) Ah, I will give a life-time of devotion and affection in exchange for the happiness you grant me ! (*Takes PHILIPPE's left hand.*) But Philippe, since you are so good, so generous, complete your noble work—

BARON. (*Taking PHILIPPE's right hand.*) Have compassion upon that poor woman who is overwhelmed with despair !

OCTAVE. Think that she may never see you more ! I have just spoken with her ; she awaits me.

BARON. She is there,—weeping.

OCTAVE. Oh, in mercy's name, be indulgent ! Do not repulse her. I beseech you, see her if only for a moment !

PHILIPPE. (*Gloomily.*) I wished to avoid an interview which cannot fail to be horribly painful to both your sister and me. (*Releases his hands from their clasp.*) You both desire that it should take place. I consent. (*To BARON.*) But I must depend upon you to abridge it. Hasten my departure by returning here for me.

BARON. I promise. (*Turns up stage to back, passes to door R., opens it, and steps back between it and the chair R. of door at back.*)

OCTAVE. Oh, thank you ! (*Passes to R. between the window and door, R. PHILIPPE crosses to table c., and supports himself upon it by his left hand.*)

[Enter CLAIRE by door R., supported by the BARONNE. OCTAVE and the BARON take their hats and exeunt at back, followed by the BARONNE. CLAIRE comes down before chair, R. of table. They remain a moment in silence. CLAIRE makes an effort to speak ; but failing, she falls upon chair, grasps PHILIPPE's hand, and bursts into sobs.]

CLAIRe. Oh ! Philippe—

PHILIPPE. (*Troubled.*) Claire,—in Heaven's name,—you unman me, and I have need of all my courage. I beg of you, be calm ;—control yourself if you have any respect for my life ! (*Disengages his hand from her clasp and recedes a little to L.*)

CLAIRe. Your life !—Ah, let them take mine a hundred times over ! It was my passion, wretch that I am, that has exposed you to this danger ! Then ought I not to bear the consequences ? Were I to suffer, I should but be expiating the wrong I've done you. And in a moment of anger I forgot all ! Oh, how you must hate me for having caused you all this misery !

PHILIPPE. (*Very gently.*) No ! I do not hate you. There

was at the outset of our common existence a misunderstanding which has caused us both much pain. I do not hold you entirely responsible, for I was also at fault. I failed to understand you, and knew not how to completely sacrifice myself. I loved you too well, and I have suffered accordingly! But I do not wish to leave you with the thought that I bear you the slightest ill-will. (*He takes the left hand of CLAIRE, who rises.*) Give me your hand, as I give you mine, and let us say adieu.

CLAIRe. Adieu! No, no! Why should we? (*Forcibly.*) You shall not fight! (*Comes down R.*) I shall prevent you!

PHILIPPE. How?

CLAIRe. By sacrificing my pride to your safety! Oh, nothing shall daunt me since your life is at stake! I will humiliate myself before the Duchesse.—If it is necessary, I will go and find the Duc. (*Turns up stage. PHILIPPE bars her passage.*)

PHILIPPE. I forbid it! You bear my name; do not forget that! Any humiliation that affects you, affects me likewise. (*Forcibly.*) Besides, understand that I execrate this man who has been the cause of my misfortune! and rest assured that the moment that places me face to face with him has been long and anxiously awaited!

CLAIRe. (*In anguish.*) Philippe!

PHILIPPE. It was no trifle for me to suffer his presence in my house. I wished to have him within my reach. Full well I knew of what he was capable, and for my complete justification in your eyes, I only waited for him to add to the outrage of his desertion that of his new love!

CLAIRe. (*With disgust.*) Ah!

PHILIPPE. But I knew you also, and was sure that through you, in an hour of supreme revolt, the knave would be delivered into my hands. (*Comes down L.*) You have done just what I expected of you. Now, the rest remains with me. (*Turns up stage; as he reaches R. of chair, first entrance L., CLAIRE throws her arms about his neck.*)

CLAIRe. Oh, that is out of the question! Philippe, it is madness! I will not leave you! (*She forces PHILIPPE into chair and falls upon her knees at his R.*)

PHILIPPE. No, no! Let me go!

CLAIRe. (*Desperately.*) I will not have him kill you! Ah, Philippe,—one moment! Listen to me, look at me!—Will you never understand me? Can you not see how I adore you? Have you not long suspected it in the anguish of my voice, the wildness of my eyes?

PHILIPPE. (*Attempting to loosen her hold.*) Claire!

CLAIRe. Ah, do not prevent my speaking! If you only knew how I love you! Remain with me, mine forever! We are so young and have so much to enjoy! (*PHILIPPE makes a movement to rise; CLAIRE prevents him.*) Do not leave me! What care we for this man and woman whom we detest?—We will

forget them. Let us go far away from them, if you will. There it will be all love, happiness, and life ! (They rise.)

PHILIPPE. (Releasing himself.) But here are duty and honor !

CLAI'RE. No, no ! (The BARON appears at back.)

PHILIPPE. Silence ! (He passes to R. of CLAI'RE and turns up to second entrance. CLAI'RE supports herself upon back of chair.)

CLAI'RE. Ah ! It is all over, and I am lost !—

BARON. (To PHILIPPE.) The time is up. [Exit at back.

(PHILIPPE comes down and takes CLAI'RE's left hand; CLAI'RE seizes him; they both turn up to L. of door at back.)

PHILIPPE. (Gently, to CLAI'RE.) Adieu !

CLAI'RE. (Supplicatingly.) Ah ! Do not leave me so ! With that icy word upon your lips ! Say that you love me ! Do not go until you have told me so ! (PHILIPPE loosens CLAI'RE's arms; takes her head between his hands and kisses her brow; he hesitates a moment, then takes her hands.)

PHILIPPE. Pray God that I may survive !

[Exit at back, closing the door behind him.

CLAI'RE. (In despair.) Ah !— (She falls upon chair L. of door at back; after a moment she rises mechanically and comes down to back of chair to R. of table; she staggers, but suddenly recovering herself, glances about her and darts to window.) There he goes ! He has reached the park,—enters the allée,—he disappears ! (Comes down to back of easy-chair, first entrance R.) My God ! what if I should never see him again ! (Comes down c.) No, no ; it is impossible ! (Crosses to L.) Why did I let him go ? I was mad ! I ought to have clung to him,—I must follow him ! (Turns up stage to L. of easy-chair near table.) That miserable Duc will kill him !—Oh, no, no,—I will save him ! [Exit precipitately at back.

END OF FIRST TABLEAU.

SECOND TABLEAU.

SCENE.—A cross-road in the forest. At fourth entrance c., a group of trees; between this group and the wing, a shrub. At first entrance L., a flat moss-grown rock. Upon the rock a case of pistols. As the curtain rises, MOULINET is discovered seated upon rock; the DUC DE BLIGNY pacing up and down stage, as far as third entrance.

MOULINET. (Lamenting.) Ah ! mercy on us ! mercy on us !

DUC. (c. and looking off third entrance, R.) Ah ! here are De Pontac and the doctor.

MOULINET. (Nervously.) The doctor,—so soon ! (Rises and turns up stage to second entrance L. DE PONTAC and DR. SERVAN enter, third entrance R., and pass to c.)

DE PONTAC. (*Presenting the doctor.*) Monsieur le Docteur Servan. (*They salute.—The Duc and Moulinet come down R., Moulinet to L. of Duc. De Pontac and the doctor cross and exit by second entrance L.*)

MOULINET. (*To Duc.*) See here, Monsieur le Duc, is there no means of settling this affair reasonably? I'm all of a tremble; have passed the night reading the most frightful descriptions of wounds by fire-arms,—and I declare that if I have accompanied you thus far, it was only in the hope of urging you not to push this matter to the end.

DUC. Have you forgotten what your daughter said to me when I left her?

MOULINET. That she hoped you were going to avenge her?—Well, my daughter is a fool for having excited you to violence. It was her place to have exhorted you to a reconciliation.—All might have been easily arranged.—A passing discord between two lady friends; a nonsensical quarrel between two cousins.—They might have kissed each other, and all would have been well. But a duel, a scandal, a rupture!—(*De Pontac enters second entrance L., and passes to c.*) And you wouldn't consider the consequences!—

DUC. (*Smiling.*) My dear Monsieur,—stay, tell De Pontac all about it!

MOULINET. (*To De Pontac, who comes down to his L.*) Why, certainly!—Every day of our lives similar affairs are settled peaceably. It's the easiest thing in the world.—We draw up a little report. Madame Derblay retracts what she has said; my daughter retracts her reply; you, son-in-law, retract your challenge; everybody retracts something,—and so nothing remains—

DUC. (*Coldly.*) Except for us to back out!

MOULINET. Which can be gracefully done.

DE PONTAC. Not by such gentlemen as Monsieur Derblay and Monsieur de Bligny.

MOULINET. Monsieur, I also am brave at heart, but I am filled with remorse, I accuse myself of being the cause of what has happened, and I am completely upset at the thought of seeing two of my fellow-creatures cut each other's throat! See here, Duc; listen to me, my dear boy, be reasonable—for my sake! (*Tenderly.*) I promise you that you shan't be the loser by it! (*Duc shakes hands with Moulinet in silence.*) Monsieur De Pontac! (*Moulinet turns up stage to second entrance, a little to R.*)

DE PONTAC. I tell you it is out of the question, Moulinet! (*He looks off at third entrance, L. The Duc turns up stage to first entrance, R. De Pontac recedes a step to R.*) Silence!—Here come the gentlemen!

MOULINET. (*Groaning.*) Oh, mercy on us! mercy on us!

[Enter PHILIPPE, the BARON and OCTAVE by third entrance, L.; at the same time, the DOCTOR enters by second entrance, L. The BARON carries a case of pistols, which he places behind the rock. PHILIPPE and the DUC exchange salutations. PHILIPPE comes down L. the DUC comes down R. The BARON, OCTAVE, DE PONTAC and MOULINET form a group c., and draw lots for the weapons.]

OCTAVE. (Approaching PHILIPPE.) Philippe, listen to me. You are a remarkably brave man, and I can speak plainly to you. The DUC is a dead shot; therefore, the BARON and I, in order to equalize the chances, have insisted that he shall not be allowed the time to judge of the distance. You are to be placed back to back; you will each walk to your position, and the moment the signal is given, you will both turn. In heaven's name, no generosity, no hesitation.

PHILIPPE. Leave me to act. You see, my hand does not tremble. (PHILIPPE and OCTAVE turn up stage to first entrance L., in front of rock. The BARON comes down to foreground L., drops a glove, then turns up stage to back, R., counting the steps as he goes; upon reaching the second entrance, c., he pauses, casts a glance at the space over which he has passed, then continues to count his steps; he pauses at fourth entrance, R., and drops his other glove: he then comes down behind rock, takes a pistol from the case which is upon it, and retires a few steps. DE PONTAC then advances to take a pistol from the same case, and carries it to the DUC, while the BARON carries his to PHILIPPE, leading him at the same time up to second entrance, c., DE PONTAC following smit with the DUC. The adversaries are placed back to back, PHILIPPE facing up stage to back, R.; the DUC facing foreground, L. DE PONTAC hands his weapon to the DUC, and retires to second entrance, L. The BARON gives his pistol to PHILIPPE, shakes hands with him, and joins DE PONTAC, OCTAVE, MOULINET and the DOCTOR, who are grouped at second entrance, L.)

BARON. Take your places, gentlemen.—(The DUC and PHILIPPE turn up their collars in order to conceal their throats; they then take their places,—the DUC coming down to foreground, L.; PHILIPPE going up stage to back, fourth entrance, R. Upon reaching the gloves, they pause and cock their weapons.)

DE PONTAC. Are you ready?

PHILIPPE and DUC. Yes. (At this moment CLAIRE appears to R. of group of trees, coming from L.)

CLAIRe. There they are!

BARON. Fire! (PHILIPPE and the DUC turn; the latter fires hastily. CLAIRE casts herself before PHILIPPE; she staggers and falls.)

CLAIRe. Ah!

ALL. (In dismay.) Ah!

PHILIPPE. Great God! (PHILIPPE and the DUC drop their

weapons; all present surround CLAIRE, with the exception of the DUC who passes to first entrance, R. They raise CLAIRE, PHILIPPE takes her in his arms and bears her to the rock. In the meantime, the DOCTOR removes the pistol-case and places it behind the rock. He then takes his instrument-case from his pocket. PHILIPPE places CLAIRE upon the rock, with her head resting upon his shoulder. DE PONTAC and MOULINET cross to first entrance, R., to R. of DUC.)

CLAIRE. I die for you, Philippe,—I love you. (*She faints.*)

BARON. (*To DUC, who stands pale and trembling.*) Depart, Due! After such a misfortune, the encounter is impossible. (*Having crossed to L. of DUC.*)

DUC. Not until I know whether she lives.

PHILIPPE. (*To Doctor.*) Is it serious?

DOCTOR SERVAN. (*Having cut away the lace about CLAIRE's left hand and wrist, and staunched the blood with a handkerchief.*) No!

BARON. (*To DUC.*) No danger.—Go!

[*Exit the DUC, followed by DE PONTAC and MOULINET, by first entrance R.* (*Left to right.*)]

(*CLAIRE lies upon the rock: PHILIPPE kneels beside her; the BARON, OCTAVE, and the DOCTOR are grouped at second entrance.*)

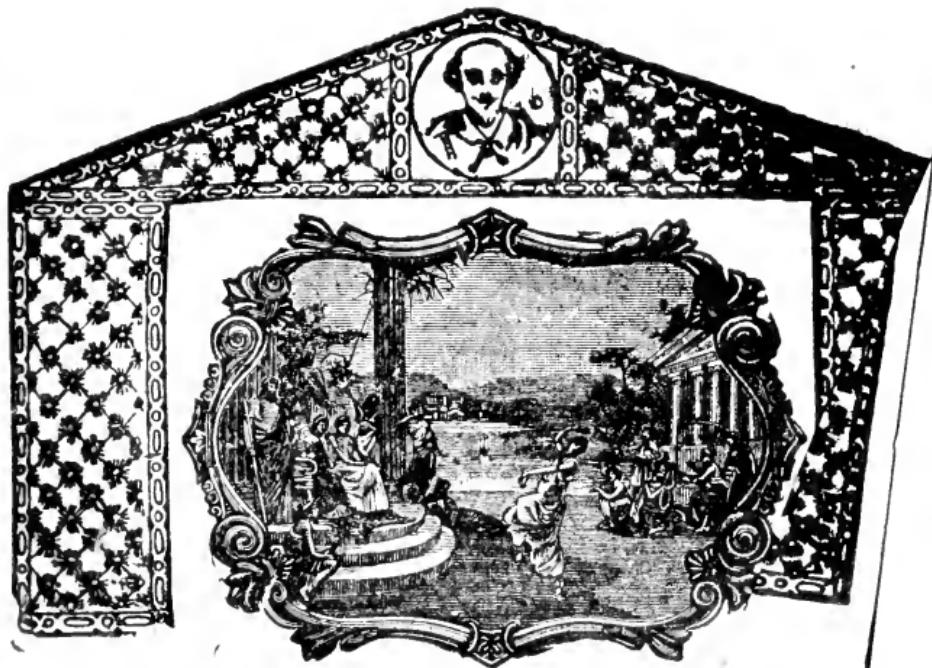
CLAIRE. (*Reviving little by little, sees PHILIPPE beside her and casts her arms about his neck.—Languidly.*) I am dead, am I not, my best beloved,—dead for you? You smile upon me, I am in your arms!—Ah, how sweet is death! (*She suddenly recovers consciousness and starts up.* PHILIPPE raises and supports her.) No, no; this pain,—I still live! (*Looks at PHILIPPE in anguish.*) Only one word! Speak!—Do you love me?

PHILIPPE. (*Passionately.*) I adore you!

CLAIRE. (*Falling into his arms.*) Ah!—How happy I am!

CURTAIN.





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